ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF VISION ON CONGREGATIONAL HEALTH

IN THE WEST OHIO CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

by

David Michael Cady

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of the vision of the Core

Process for Making Disciples on local congregations in the West Ohio Conference of the

United Methodist Church.

The study surveyed a criterion-based sample of local congregations in West Ohio

using the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire to measure quality characteristics of

church health. In addition, a researcher-designed questionnaire was used in interviews

with focus groups consisting of clergy, lay members to annual conference, members of

the West Ohio cabinet, and the West Ohio bishop to examine the perceptions of

conference leadership to systemic change.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: NEW BEGINNINGS FOR A NEW JOURNEY

Failure is not fatal, but failure to change might be.
                                John R. Wooden (Wooden and Jamison 96)

The year 2001 was a time of new beginnings. In addition to being the beginning

of the third millennium AD, 2001 was a time of new beginnings for me personally as

well. On 10 June 2001, I was ordained an elder in the West Ohio Conference of the

United Methodist Church. My ordination signified the completion of one part of a

journey and the beginning of another. After three years of seminary training and three

years of supervised ministry, the church was confirming a call to ministry that I sensed

God had given to me years before. Following the ordination service held in Hoover

Auditorium at Lakeside, Ohio, my family and friends gathered on the shore of Lake

Erie as I baptized my son, Luke, and performed my first act of ministry as an ordained

elder in the United Methodist Church. Both the ordination and baptism services were

special times of new beginnings.

Another sense of newness began earlier that week as fresh winds of vision and

transformation, which many had sensed throughout the four-day conference, began to

move through Hoover Auditorium. The West Ohio Conference had received a new

bishop in September 2000, and a new vision for ministry was being unveiled at the 2001

Annual Conference. In his episcopal address, Bishop Bruce Ough outlines the new

vision that he and many others believed was emerging in West Ohio.

Using the story of Bartimaeus in Mark 10:46-52, Bishop Ough outlines what he

called "the four essential movements of Jesus' model of disciple-making" often referred

to as the Core Process for Making Disciples:

Jesus invites us into community, the very center of God's grace. Jesus encourages us to become vulnerable to the hurts and needs of others and invite people into the presence of Christ. Jesus invites us to trust a new reality only visible through the eyes of faith. Jesus empowers us to bear witness and to make visible his transforming power. (3)

The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church states that the mission of the United Methodist Church "is to make disciples of Jesus Christ" and that "local churches provide the most significant arena though which disciple-making occurs" (87). In his address, the bishop clearly stated that the West Ohio Conference exists for the purpose of making disciples by equipping its local churches for ministry. He also stated that the emerging vision is "a conference in which every congregation is a healthy, growing, spiritually vital, risking-taking center for making and equipping disciples of Jesus for the purpose of transforming the world. That's what we're being called to" (Ough 4).

Clearly this address ushered in a time of new beginnings for the conference. Following his arrival in September 2000, Bishop Ough traveled to each of the fourteen districts to listen to the hopes and concerns of the people of West Ohio. He met with 140 leaders in February 2001 for a time of prayer and visioning. The emerging vision that began to unfold during that day in June 2001 was encouraging for many while unsettling for others. Aware of the new direction being taken, Bishop Ough spoke of the change that would prove to be needed in the conference.

If we are to reach this preferred future, we must be willing to think strategically and to act boldly. If we are to realize this vision we must be willing to leave our institutionalized, mechanized, and bureaucratic view of who we are and live into a new more organic, more dynamic way of imagining and organizing our ministry. This means change. (4)

As the bishop spoke these words, a great amount of tension was experienced in

the auditorium caused by the boldness of what was being said and the implication of what

it would mean for the annual conference. Many did not know whether to cheer or cry or

both.

Many of those attending the annual conference had heard vision statements from

conference and denominational leaders before; however, as if to put flesh on the bones of

the vision, Bishop Ough identifies six interactive areas of mission and ministry that he

believed must be addressed for the annual conference to create a comprehensive approach

to achieve this emerging vision:

1. Starting new churches and worshipping congregations to multiply our
   centers of disciple-making.
2. Revitalizing the disciple-making process in existing congregations.
3. Re-aligning our conference and district resources to match our
   emerging vision.
4. Developing spiritual leaders (both lay and clergy) to equip our
   congregations for their disciple-making mission.
5. Funding the vision in new and creative ways.
6. Strengthening the connection to extend and support the vision. (4)

A new beginning for a new journey was experienced at the 2001 West Ohio

Annual Conference. For me personally, this annual conference was a new beginning for

the journey of answering the call to ministry. For my son, June 2001 was a new

beginning for the journey of faith in Christ Jesus and a formal incorporation into the

Church. For the West Ohio Conference, the 2001 annual conference was a new beginning

for the journey of faithfully being the Church in our part of the world and beyond.

Context of the Study

The West Ohio Conference is comprised of fourteen districts: Athens, Cincinnati,

Columbus North, Columbus South, Dayton North, Dayton South, Defiance, Findlay,

Lima, Newark, Portsmouth, Springfield, Toledo, and Wilmington. The conference covers

two-thirds of the central, southern, and western geographical sections of Ohio and includes three of the four largest urban areas of the state: Columbus, Cincinnati, and Toledo; however, many of the churches of West Ohio can be found in county seat towns and other rural settings.

The West Ohio Annual Conference is one of the largest annual conferences in United Methodism. According to the West Ohio Journal of Conference Reports 2000, the conference consisted of 269,979 members at the beginning of the 1999 calendar year (S-70). Nevertheless, like most United Methodist annual conferences, as well as other mainline denominations, the West Ohio Conference has experienced a steady decline in membership and average worship attendance. During 2003, West Ohio showed an increase in average worship attendance. Table 1.1 provides a glimpse of the membership and average worship attendance figures in West Ohio from 1999 to 2003.

Table 1.1. West Ohio Conference Statistics (1999–2003)

Calendar Year	Membership at Beginning of Year	Membership at End of Year	% of Change in Membership	Average Worship Attendance
1999	269,979	264,203	-2.2	127,167
2000	264,203	259,224	-1.9	126,089
2001	259,224	255,312	-1.5	124,703
2002	255,312	250,653	-1.8	123,520
2003	250,447	243,888	-2.7	126,407

Source: West Ohio Journal, 2000 S-70; West Ohio Journal, 2001 S-70; West Ohio Journal 2002 S-70; West Ohio Journal 2003 S-70; West Ohio Journal 2004 S-70.

The local congregations of the West Ohio Conference represent a people of extensive diversity theologically, racially, and economically. An individual could

worship in a West Ohio congregation, which offers a highly liturgical style one Sunday, and participate in an informal contemporary service the following week in a different location. Inner-city churches can contrast greatly with those who gather to meet in the hills of southeastern Ohio, and congregations can conceivably range in size from three to three thousand.

Analysis of the Problem

Healthy, vital congregations are not the norm in American churches today. Likewise, visionary leadership is rare in American congregations. Church researchers such as George Barna and Lyle E. Schaller argue that a vast majority of American churches are either stagnant or declining. Furthermore, few church leaders are either gifted or trained to be effective visionary leaders. The combination of declining churches and leaders without a vision of a preferred future creates severe disadvantages for church growth and church health.

The problem of church decline combined with a lack of effective visionary leadership is not confined to specific denominations or geographical regions of the country rather is a widespread problem with which many denominations have dealt over the last forty years. My own denomination, the United Methodist Church (UMC), is not immune to this situation. The UMC has declined steadily over the past four decades with few signs of slowing down.

One strategy to reverse this trend is to train pastors to plant new congregations. Church-planting efforts have proven to be an effective means of growing healthy congregations, even in mainline denominations; however, whether planting efforts have a positive effect on existing congregations that are plateaued or declining is yet to be

determined. While church planting must certainly continue, indeed must increase, efforts to revitalize existing churches must also increase. Just as John Wesley set out to renew his beloved Anglican Church, so, too, must Wesley's spiritual descendants strive to renew the United Methodist Church through both church planting and church revitalization.

A clear, concise vision of a preferred future is fundamental to such a renewing effort. The power of such a vision is that it is able to initiate the necessary changes required for renewal. A clear, concise vision helps to create unity and focus. It provides the underlying conviction to change and gives leaders the language to explain why changes are being made. Vision allows leaders to speak with certainty concerning the core values of an organization and to establish boundaries that guide actions based on those core values.

What needs to be determined is whether or not the vision of the Core Process for Making Disciples adopted by the West Ohio Annual Conference has impacted the transformation of local churches. Likewise, research has yet to demonstrate how conference leadership perceives the systemic changes in structure and practice that are deemed necessary in order to align resources with the guiding vision.

To confirm the relationship between vision and church health, I conducted a survey of churches in the West Ohio Conference using the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire (BCHQ). I then compared the data to research completed in 2001 by Dr. Brian Allen Law. Furthermore, I developed an open-ended questionnaire to measure reactions to the conference vision by focus groups of clergy, lay members of annual conferences, and members of the West Ohio cabinet. Finally, a personal interview with

Bishop Ough was conducted to gain his perspective on the vision's impact on the conference.

Biblical/Theological Framework

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate a theology of hope vital to the counter cultural witness of the Church in general and to the impact of Christian visionary leadership in particular. This theology of hope is based on the book of 1 Peter, which serves to remind the Church of the living hope it possesses as a result of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Such a hope enables the Church to live as a counter cultural witness in an increasingly hostile and pagan world. In addition to 1 Peter, examinations of 1Timothy 3, Titus 1:5-9, and Luke 12:42-48 further illumines the subjects of faithful Christian leadership. The exegesis of 1Timothy 3 and Titus 1:5-9 details biblical characteristics of Christian leadership, and Luke 12:42-48 deals with the importance of Christian leaders being faithful stewards of God's vision. The theme of hope is identified as the foundational element for faith and renewal in the Christian community.

The theological underpinnings of this study focus on the power of hope, with the eschatological hope of Christ as the foundation. Christian leaders must both possess and convey the reality of hopefulness about future that awaits the Church. Such hope not only points to what will be in the future but has the power to transform what is in the present. Christian hope originates in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

The themes of faith and renewal were also examined to determine how they relate to visionary leadership and change in the Church. God's plan for renewal correlates with faithful leadership. A study of 1 Timothy 3:2-12 and Titus 1:5-9 examines the biblical

requirements for Christian leadership. The Christian as a responsible steward of God's

grace applies not only to the community of faith as a whole but especially to those placed

in positions of leadership within the community. The standards found in the two selected

passages on leadership from the pastoral epistles are based upon minimum standards of

secular leadership of the first century. Nevertheless, what makes these standards of

leadership Christian in nature is the emphasis placed on adherence to orthodox Christian

belief. In essence, the most basic biblical requirement for leaders of a community of faith

is that they be faithful. Faithful stewardship lived out in hope is the essence of effective

leadership. An examination of Luke 12:42-48 concludes the theological section of

Chapter 2 as hope and faithful stewardship are linked together as characteristics of

effective Christian leadership that foster faith and renewal in the Church.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of vision on congregational

health in the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church. Bishop Ough's

2001 episcopal address, in which a vision was cast for every congregation to become a

"healthy, growing, spiritually vital, risk-taking center for making and equipping disciples

of Jesus for the purpose of transforming the world," served as the rationale for

implementing this study (see Appendix A). The purpose was accomplished by using the

Beeson Church Health Questionnaire and comparing a set of quality health characteristics

drawn from a random sample survey of congregations from each district in West Ohio. In

particular, the survey sought to identify the relative strengths of the sample congregations

in comparison to the conference vision of the four areas of the Core Process as outlined in

the 2001 episcopal address.

In addition to the survey of local congregations, interviews with focus groups, including clergy, lay members to annual conference, and members of the West Ohio cabinet members, were conducted in order to determine perceptions of systemic change needed to realign conference structures and resources for the fulfillment of the vision and the progress in the change of the conference's strategy. A personal interview with the bishop was also included in the study. I designed an open-ended questionnaire used to measure the perceptions of local church and conference leadership of how the vision has impacted the West Ohio Conference.

Research Questions

In order to fulfill the purposes of this study, three research questions were identified.

1. What is the change in Beeson Church Health characteristics from 2001 to 2004 in congregations of the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church (WOC)?

2. What has been the perceived impact of the vision of the Core Process of Making Disciples?

3. How do the changes in church health correlate to the perceived impact of the vision by conference leadership?

Definition of Terms

In this study, the principle terms to be used are defined as follows.

The *Beeson Church Health Questionnaire* (BCHQ) is an evaluative tool developed by four former Beeson pastors: Brian Law, Jim Kinder, Scott B. McKee, and Keith Taylor. The BCHQ was designed to measure quality characteristics of a local

church for the purpose of diagnosing church health. The quality characteristics of the

BCHQ are empowering leadership, passionate spirituality, authentic community,

functional structures, transforming discipleship, engaging worship, intentional

evangelism, and mobilized laity.

The *Core Process for Making Disciples* is a systems approach for accomplishing

the United Methodist Church's stated vision of making disciples of Jesus Christ. The four

parts of the Core Process are reaching and receiving, relating to God, nurturing in

discipleship, and sending forth for mission and service. Other language used to describe

the Core Process includes radical hospitality, passionate worship, faith-forming

relationships and experiences, and risk-taking service.

Systemic change involves altering organizational patterns of structure and practice

in order to create alignment between objectives and actions.

Visionary leadership involves enabling an organization to move from a current

reality toward a preferred future guided by a clear, concise image of how that future may

appear.

Methodology

This study was an evaluative case study utilizing the Beeson Church Health

Questionnaire to determine church health characteristics along with a researcher-designed

questionnaire to measure local church and conference leadership's perception of systemic

change. The church health characteristic data collected from the local church survey was

correlated to the four aspects of the conference's Core Process vision, whereas the results

of the focus group questionnaire were used to measure local church and conference

leadership's perception of systemic change and how such change has impacted the

conference vision.

Population and Subjects

The population for this study was a criterion-based sample of churches from each of the fourteen districts in the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church based on Law's 2001 sample of forty-five churches (81). In addition to the sample churches, focus groups consisting of clergy, lay members to annual conference, and members of the West Ohio cabinet were interviewed to determine the perceived impact of systematic changes in conference structures. Finally, a personal interview was conducted with Bishop Bruce Ough.

Delimitations and Variables

One variable to be measured in this study was church growth. Church growth was measured by examining the membership and average worship attendance statistics of the sample of churches and by noting changes in membership and average worship attendance over the five-year time period of 1999-2004. The changes in membership and average worship attendance were compared to the change in Beeson Church Health characteristics from Law's study.

A second variable of this study was church health as measured by the Beeson quality characteristics of empowering leadership, passionate spirituality, authentic community, functional structures, transforming discipleship, engaging worship, intentional evangelism, and mobilized laity. The Beeson quality characteristics were then correlated to the four aspects of the Core Process: radical hospitality, passionate worship, faith-forming relationships and experiences, and risk-taking service.

The third variable of this study was vision, which was measured by the

perceptions of change by local church and conference leadership. This variable was operationalized by conducting interviews with two focus groups of local church conference leaders using an open-ended questionnaire and a personal interview with the bishop of the West Ohio Conference.

Instrumentation

The Beeson Church Health Questionnaire was the primary instrument used in this study. The BCHQ has fifty-five questions using a five-point Likert scale.

I designed the secondary instrument. This open-ended questionnaire consisted of three guiding issues as well as questions dealing with leaders' perceptions of systemic change within an organization. The guiding issues for the interviews were leadership and vision, hope and health, health and growth.

Data Collection

This study measured the current state of church health for the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church by using quality characteristics as defined by the BCHQ as it relates to the Core Process for Making Disciples. The collection of data consisted of three phases. Phase one involved the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire. Phase two consisted of a series of focus group interviews with clergy, lay members to annual conference, and members of the West Ohio cabinet. Phase three was a personal interview with Bishop Ough.

After contacting the bishop's office to gain his support for the project, phase one began with letters of invitation being issued to the forty-five local churches previously studied in Law's research. The BCHQ was then distributed to the sample of twenty-one local congregations that agreed to participate. The churches in the study were given

copies of the questionnaire, a return envelope, and detailed instructions regarding the administration of the survey.

Each pastor was asked to oversee the distribution and collection of the surveys. The completed surveys were returned to me, and the data was processed at my local church. The data was analyzed and interpreted with the assistance of the Dr. Barbara Boone and Dr. Jerry Bean.

Phase two began with the focus group interview of clergy and lay members to annual conference, which was conducted at my cottage in Lakeside, Ohio, at the 2004 session of the West Ohio Annual Conference. The selection of churches for this phase of the study was accomplished by identifying five geographical regions of the conference and allowing my seven year old daughter randomly to assign a letter of the alphabet to each region. Local churches whose name began with the designated letter were then identified, and two from each region were randomly selected by my five year old son. A total of ten churches were selected to participate in the focus group interviews. A letter of invitation was mailed to each of the ten churches inviting the pastor(s) and the lay member(s) to annual conference to participate in a focus group interview. Three of the ten churches agreed to participate, and two followed through with their commitment.

Phase two continued with two focus group interviews involving members of the West Ohio cabinet. These interviews were conducted at the West Ohio Conference Center in Worthington, Ohio, and were arranged by contacting the bishop's office. A total of eleven of the fourteen district superintendents participated in the interviews.

Phase three of the study involved a personal interview with Bishop Ough, which was scheduled through his office. The quantitative data of the BCHQ and the qualitative

data of the focus group interviews were compared with each other and served as the basis

for the findings of the study.

Importance of the Study

In 2001, Law completed a study of the West Ohio Conference using the Beeson

Church Health Questionnaire to determine the relationship between church health and

church growth. The scope of his study of the conference focused on the years between

1996 and 2001. In 2000, the West Ohio Conference underwent a change in episcopal

leadership with the arrival of Bishop Ough. Bishop Ough's focus on vision has begun to

unify the conference toward an agenda of change and renewal. In his study, Law suggests

that a random survey of local churches in West Ohio using the BCHQ be conducted in

2004 with the results being compared to his findings in 2001 (114).

The importance of this study is evidenced by the change in conference leadership

and how a unifying vision has impacted church health throughout the conference. The

scope of this study focused on the years between 1999 and 2004 and attempted to

measure the correlation of church health characteristics with the four aspects of the Core

Process vision: outreach, worship, discipleship, and service. In addition, the study

attempted to determine the perception of how systemic change in conference leadership

structures has also impacted positive change in the conference.

Overview of the Dissertation

In Chapter 2, a variety of seminal literature dealing with systems thinking,

organizational change, and visionary leadership is reviewed: the literature of systems and

change theory, the literature of visionary leadership from both the secular and Christian

arenas, and a study of the biblical passages from 1 Peter, 1 Timothy 3:1-12, Titus 1:5-9,

and Luke 12:42-48 from the theological perspectives of vision, faith, and renewal

offering support to the underlying theology of hope.

Chapter 3 provides a more in-depth explanation of the design of the study.

Chapter 4 furnishes an examination of the research findings. Chapter 5 reports the

significant findings of the study as well as the implications that result from these

findings.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

Chapter 2 reviews four types of literature appropriate for visionary leadership in organizations. Both the church and corporate America are composed of highly structured organizations. Although structure is necessary for function, overly bureaucratic systems easily become stagnant and ineffective. Change, therefore, is required for unproductive systems to reach a higher level of productivity. Being able to identify and understand how organizational systems work is important to knowing when and how change can be implemented effectively. Authors such as Robert E. Quinn, Michael Hammer and James Champy, John Kotter, Lyle E. Schaller, Jim Herrington, and Ezra Earl Jones have served as leaders of their fields in the areas of organization and change. Systems thinking and change theory comprise the first part of the literature review.

Second, the literature of visionary leadership from a secular perspective is surveyed. Much has been written in the past quarter century and millions of dollars are invested each year by corporations in an attempt to develop visionary leadership. Seminal authors such as James MacGregor Burns, Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, Peter Senge, James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, and Jim Collins have much to say about the role vision plays in leadership.

Third, following the writings of visionary leaders in the secular arena, visionary leadership has become a popular topic in the church as well. Because many of America's churches, particularly in mainline denominations, have plateaued and declined over the last forty years, Christians are hungry for visionary leadership that will reverse this negative trend. Authors such as Dale Galloway, Leighton Ford, George Barna, Leith

Anderson, Aubrey Malphurs, and Andy Stanley are reviewed and represent a Christian

perspective.

Finally, the biblical component of this literature review examines a theology of

hope using 1 Peter as the base text. The impact of the eschatological hope of the Christian

faith is discussed, particularly on how such a hope enables the Church to fulfill its

mission in the present. In addition, this section examines the biblical requirements of

Christian leadership found in 1 Timothy 3:1-16 and Titus 1:5-9 as well as the concept of

leaders as stewards of God's vision found in Luke 12:42-48. Theological underpinnings

of faith and renewal are highlighted in these biblical studies. In this section of the

literature review, more is written about these biblical precedents as well as the

relationship of faith and renewal.

Systems Thinking and Change Theory

The activity of an organization takes place within a given system that has been

established and maintained over a period of time. A system can be defined as a set of

different components connected to form a complex unit that functions by a set of

observable rules. These observable rules allow a system to function as an interdependent,

collective entity for accomplishing specific tasks in that it is made up of several parts that

combine to form a whole (Quinn 60). The systems in an organization tend to become

ineffective once they fail to keep up with the pace of change in the organization's larger

environment. With the passing of time, systems often become misaligned and fail to

produce what was originally intended. An organizational system is designed for the

results it produces; thus, improvements must be made in the system to produce a different

result (Jones 26). Furthermore, changes are required by the people who participate in the

system in order for the system as a whole to change. When a system is faced with chronic problems, virtually all who participate in the system have played a part in perpetuating the problem (Herrington, Creech, and Taylor 31).

Every system is appropriately designed to achieve its present results because every component or participant in the system contributes to what is being produced. In many areas of life, viewing an organization as an integrated whole is an organic way of operating and is much a healthier way of functioning. Edwin Friedman observes this fact in a variety of activities:

> Thinking systematically has always been natural to chess champions. Only the most unsophisticated football fans reserve their praise for the ball carrier alone, or blame the quarterback every time he gets "sacked." In meteorology, it has long been recognized that for a tornado to come into existence, the temperature, the barometric pressure, and the humidity all must reach certain thresholds in the atmosphere at exactly the same time. (15)

Thinking with a systems perspective provides the opportunity to examine how various dynamics such as relationships, structures, and resources affect what is being produced by the system.

Systems Thinking and Leadership

Leaders must be able to see the entire system of the organizations they lead (Dick and Burry 82). In order for deep change to take place, a leader must understand the nature of systems thinking. Thinking in systems allows leaders to see the life of an organization in all its complexity (Herrington, Creech, and Taylor 55). Rather than getting lost in the detailed processes of day to day activity, leaders must have an understanding of the organization's larger objective to think in systems.

Systems thinking enables a leader to think at a higher level of abstraction

concerning an organization (Cummings 8). Seeing the organization as interconnected

parts enables the leader to see how each section works together to form a combined

whole. Thinking in systems provides leaders with a language for describing the

organization because it provides a holistic way of viewing the organization and allows a

leader to both think in a different way and to see what is happening with clarity

(Herrington, Creech, and Taylor 50-51). Seeing an organization in this holistic way

permits more synthesis and contextualization to take place when determining how to

move the organization toward a preferred future (Cummings 9).

Systems Thinking and Organizational Improvement

Leaders who think in systems understand that how an organization views and

interacts with others outside of the organization greatly influences what the system

produces. Therefore, two fundamental attributes surface as an organization engages in a

quest for quality in a system: continuous improvement and an emphasis on listening to

customers (Jones 12-13). Visionary leaders pay attention to what is expected of them by

their customers and thus continually seek to improve the quality of the product their

system produces. Organizational improvement requires leaders to realign the components

of the system to raise the quality what is being produced.

Alignment moves the entire organization toward its intended results (Dick and

Burry 61). Misalignment of just one part of an organization's system causes the entire

system to be affected. This has been referred to as "suboptimization" (60). An

organization is optimized when all processes within the system are appropriating its

resources and working together toward the common goal. Alignment is achieved when an

organization moves all activities and processes in the direction of its desired outcome

(61). In systems thinking, clarifying goals and identifying areas of realignment are simply the beginning of a larger process.

Hammer and Champy coined the term "reengineering" in reference to the need for leaders to change the nature of systems. In essence, reengineering deals with systemic change in organizations. Reengineering is defined as "the fundamental rethinking and radical design of business processes to achieve dramatic improvements in critical, contemporary measures of performance, such as cost, quality, service, and speed" (35). From that definition four key words must be further explained: fundamental, radical, dramatic, and processes.

Reengineering is fundamental because it requires an organization to focus on what should be rather than what is (Hammer and Champy 36). When an organization focuses on fundamentals, it returns to its basic purpose for existence. Reengineering is radical redesign because real change is not superficial but drastically disregards the old method of doing business. In order to initiate change in an organization, oftentimes radical measures must be taken. For example, in the pursuit of alignment, leaders may intentionally misalign resources to create a radical dissonance in the organization. Reengineering is also dramatic in that it is concerned with major improvements. Making radical changes in a system only to produce minimal results is neither logical nor profitable. The goal for organizational change is to make dramatic gains in performance. Another key aspect in reengineering deals with processes because most leaders have been trained to focus on tasks rather than the overall objective of the organization. When leadership learns to watch the processes of a system, they are able to see what is happening with clarity (Herrington, Creech, and Taylor 50). Focusing on processes

allows leaders to induce change that affects the end result that the various processes of the system produce.

The marketplace in which organizations exist has become a highly customer-driven economy. Combined with the increase of competition, satisfying the customer becomes a driving force for companies to stay in business. The accelerated rate of change in society compels organizations constantly to reorganize in order to keep pace. Furthermore, because systems are often overlooked and have been in place for quite a long time, changing them is not easy. Quinn observes the difficult, yet important, decisions associated with deep change in an organization:

> Organization and change are not complementary concepts. To organize is to systemize. The process of formalization initially makes the organization more efficient and effective. As time goes on, however, these routine patterns move the organization toward decay and stagnation. The organization loses alignment with the changing, external reality. When the internal and external alignment is lost, the organization faces a choice: either adapt or take the road to a slow death. (5)

Attempts to change a system result in resistance. This is the very nature of a system. When leaders push the system to change, they discover that the system pushes back. Yet without appropriate change in the system, the quality of what is being produced by the system will not be improved.

Systems Thinking and Change

John R. Wooden says, "Failure to change is often just stubbornness that comes from an unwillingness to learn, an inability to realize you're not perfect" (Wooden and Jamison 96). Change is a constant experience in life and society. In the last one hundred years, society has experienced the change of traveling by horse and buggy to traveling through space. The last half of the twentieth century produced a variety changes in

society caused by the aftershocks of World War II and the introduction of nuclear

warfare. The invention and prolific development of the computer and the Internet during

the last ten years has changed the method of communication. The terrorist attacks of 11

September 2001 have caused immeasurable instability in the psyche of American society.

Today, and far into the future, a major role of leadership must be to convince an

organization that dealing with constant change is not only necessary but will also result in

something better. The twenty-first century proves to be a time of constant societal change

as well, and organizations will be forced to change in order to compete in the constantly

changing marketplace. An old Chinese proverb says, "Unless you change direction, you

are likely to arrive at where you are headed" (qtd. in Nanus 3). This environment of

constant change will require a special kind of leadership, an innovative leadership. The

very essence of leading is innovating (Bennis 143). Visionary leaders understand how to

facilitate change within the organizations they lead in order to better achieve intended

results.

　　As change agents, visionary leaders are led by three basic assumptions: people

can change, systems can change, and a committed minority can prevail over a passive

majority (Schaller, Strategies for Change 109-10). Substantial systematic change in an

organization can occur through an intentional process; however, change cannot occur by

mere expert advice, better consultants, or more committed managers (Senge et al. 6). For

change to be more than superficial, a deeper process must engage the system over a

period of time. In Leading Change, Kotter proposes an eight-stage process for creating

major organizational change (21). Table 2.1 outlines Kotter's eight-stage process for

change.

Table 2.1. Kotter's Eight-Stage Process for Change
_____

Stage Process for Change	Description of Stages
Stage 1	Establishing a sense of urgency.
Stage 2	Creating a guiding coalition.
Stage 3	Developing a vision and strategy.
Stage 4	Communicating the change vision.
Stage 5	Empowering others for broad-based action.
Stage 6	Generating short-term wins.
Stage 7	Consolidating gains and producing more change.
Stage 8	Anchoring new approaches in the culture.

_____
Source: Kotter, Leading Change 21.

Change cannot be viewed as the enemy of the organization but should be seen as

the salvation of it (Bennis 174). Despite the inherent benefits of change, most

organizations instinctively resist change efforts. Changing the culture of an organization

is difficult for three primary reasons: indoctrination, expectations, and unconscious

behavior (Kotter, Leading Change 150-51). All cultural systems have their own way of

educating people in how to behave, which indoctrinates people into a particular culture.

Patterns of speech, behavioral expectations, and relational boundaries are deeply

ingrained in the people of a given culture. In addition, cultural expectations are reinforced

through the actions of hundreds of thousands of people. Human beings tend to yield to

the pressure to conform, and cultural systems naturally reward those who perpetuate

popular values. Cultural indoctrination and the communication of expectations happen

without much conscious intent and, therefore, is complex to challenge or even discuss. In

most organizations, people accept the way things are done because they have come to

understand how to follow the norm.

Because of the very nature of culture and its inherent resistance to change,

advocates of change initiatives must recognize the importance of an organization's ability

to learn (Senge et al. 9). Successful change agents understand that long-term change primarily requires a shift in people's thinking rather than a change in their behavior. Systemic change requires people to embrace new values, which eventually lead to new behaviors. In order for new values to be truly held by an organization, change in how people think is necessary.

Change takes time. People need time to learn and behave by a new set of values. If the necessary time and learning opportunities are not provided, people will not adopt the set of values because a value is only a value when it is chosen voluntarily (Senge et al. 13). A leader needs to display enough patience for people to talk themselves into supporting a proposal for change (Schaller, Strategies for Change 104). For deep change to occur, people in organizations must be permitted the necessary time to understand and commit to the change.

Studies have shown that a change initiative follows certain patterns of adoption in an organization. Everett M. Rogers and F. Floyd Shoemaker's research on the "Diffusion of Innovation" suggests that members of an organization generally respond to a change initiative in one of five ways (173). Innovators usually make up 2.5 percent of an organization. This group displays entrepreneurial and risk-taking behavior and normally are the first to introduce a change initiative. Early adopters, who show support for the innovation once it has been initiated, comprise approximately 13.5 percent of an organization (173). These individuals are usually very influential members of the system and can greatly affect how others respond to the change. The early majority, who demonstrate a willingness to follow but seldom lead, make up 34 percent of an organization (173). This group serves as a link between the early adopters and the fourth

group known as the late majority. This segment of the population makes up 34 percent of the system and may adopt the change initiative out of necessity or peer pressure (173). The final group comprises 16 percent of the organization and is referred to as the laggards (173). The laggards focus on the past as their point of reference and may never adopt the innovation.

In addition to the time needed to learn new values, people require time to deal with the emotional aspects of change. Kotter argues that the primary reason people resist change is not because they are given analysis that changes their thinking but because they are not shown a truth that influences their feelings (Heart of Change 1). Both thinking and feeling are significant components to responding to change, but the emotional reaction of people is often more important. Being in transition is an unsettling experience, and how people feel is more influential than what they know. William Bridges suggests that transitions involve a three-part process of endings, a neutral zone, and a beginning (88). In change initiatives, leaders often focus on ending one aspect of behavior and beginning a new one only to neglect the necessary neutral zone. A time of reorientation is needed for people to deal with the emotional aspects of embracing new values at the expense of long-held values. A mistake that many leaders make during a time of transition is forgetting the importance of providing people with fallow time to deal with emotional reactions to change (130). During this fallow time, which is much like a piece of farmland that lies dormant for a season, stories and images associated with the change initiative allow people to engage in the process of dealing with their emotions. Fallow time often provides people with the opportunity to feel positive about the change that has been initiated in their lives. A core pattern of seeing, feeling, and change is associated

with successful change. Leaders of change must help people to see the need or benefits of change, to feel an emotional connection to the idea of change, and to changing behavior that is being reinforced by the new feelings (10).

Leaders, however, can employ various methods for shortening the amount of time for change to take place. In contrast to allowing time for people to adjust to change, Schaller suggests several ways to speed up the pace of change in an organization. First, many leaders have found that the pace of change quickens during a time of crisis. In addition, intentionally increasing the level of discontent with the current reality enables change to happen sooner. Increasing the level of discontent is similar to the method of intentionally creating misalignment in an organization. Third, if the preferred future is made to look more attractive, people will generally want to increase the necessary changes needed to achieve it. Another way to speed up the pace of change is to communicate the proposed course of action more frequently. Continual communication has proved to be beneficial to a change initiative. Fifth, leaders must be intentional about building up the level of trust in the organization. People tend to adjust to change better when a high level of trust exists in an organization. Sixth, a leader needs to minimize the obstacles from the past to enable the organization to begin anew. Oftentimes the very things that have hindered the system from changing have to be removed for the organization to make progress. Finally, to speed up the pace of change, leaders should focus attention on the people in the organizations who favor the proposed change (Change Agent 64-65).

Although the pace of change can be enhanced, the important thing to understand is that leaders cannot simply change an organization by eliminating ineffective elements.

Instead they need to evolve the culture of the organization by building on its strengths.

The culture of organizations evolves naturally; they are not designed (Quinn 99).

Effective leaders, however, create and shape the culture of an organization. Visionary

leaders push organizations to excel and strive to create a culture of excellence. In order to

realize excellence, an organization must reach a point where it cares enough about an

activity to insist on surpassing what is expected of it (165). Healthy organizations sense

the need to make adaptations in the way they operate in order to meet these expectations

(Cummings 76). If leadership is successful in recreating a culture of continual

improvement, building upon strengths and insisting on excellence will result in higher

performance levels by the organization.

Visionary Leadership from a Secular Perspective

Burns says, "The ultimate test of practical leadership is the realization of

intended, real change that meets people's enduring needs" (461). Visionary leadership

takes people into a preferred future because the current reality is not sufficient. The

studies and writings of leaders in the secular business and academic world have

contributed significantly to the understanding of visionary leadership. Consequently, a

large amount of literature addressing visionary leadership exists. The literature reviewed

in this section examines prolific authors whose insights have served as the bedrock of

understanding for visionary leadership in secular pursuits.

Characteristics of Visionary Leadership

Leadership is both power and purpose (Burns 12-13). Leadership is power, not in

the sense of the conquering of or triumph over others but in the sense of influence.

Leadership also involves purpose because leaders define the direction in which an

organization is headed. Collins identifies various levels of leaders, with level five being the ultimate (17). Table 2.2 offers a glimpse of Collins' five levels of leadership.

Table 2.2. Jim Collins' Five Levels of Leadership
_____

Levels of Leadership	Description of Levels
Level 5 Executive	Builds enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will.
Level 4 Effective leader	Catalyzes commitment to and vigorous pursuit of a clear and compelling vision, stimulating higher performance standards
Level 3 Competent manager	Organizes people and resources toward the effective and efficient pursuit of predetermined objectives.
Level 2 Contributing team member	Contributes individual capabilities to the achievement of group objectives and works efficiently with others in a group setting.
Level 1 Highly capable individual	Makes productive contributions through talent, knowledge, skills, and good work habits.

_____
Source: Collins 20

Level five leaders possess two qualities that enable their organizations to grow from being good to being great. The first quality is what Collins refers to as professional will, which "demonstrates an unwavering resolve to do whatever must be done to produce the best long-term results, no matter how difficult" (36). Other adjectives that might define professional will include determination, fortitude, or commitment. The second quality is a personal humility that "demonstrates a compelling modesty, shunning public adulation" (36). Leaders who possess such humility do not require the acknowledgement of others to fuel their ego. Leadership, then, is a combination of both internal character and external influence.

In a video recording used for training leaders, Joel A. Barker suggests five leadership lessons for visionary leaders in the twenty-first century that compare to Collins' two qualities of professional will and personal humility. The first lesson is that leaders need to focus the majority of their efforts on the future. In a rapidly changing society, leaders must think ahead in order for their organizations to stay ahead. In addition, leaders must understand the nature of change. Leaders must understand not only the need for change but also the effects change has on people and organizations. The third lesson for leaders in the twenty-first century is to appreciate the complexity of organizational systems and how they work. Systems usually require continual restructuring and realignment in order to remain effective; leaders must be aware of this dynamic. Also, leaders must examine their style of leadership in order to see its effects on productivity. Various situations in leadership require different styles; therefore, leaders must not only lead with their strengths but also learn how to improve or complement their weaker qualities. Fifth, leaders will need to learn how to create a shared or common organizational vision for moving forward into the future.

In relation to the various characteristics of visionary leadership discussed in this section, the major component of leadership is an overall guiding vision (Bennis 39). Leaders are responsible for communicating the vision and paint the overall picture of tomorrow (Kouzes and Posner 111). A successful organization that moves from a current reality toward a preferred future possesses a guiding vision or a common goal. This goal should be both sensible to the head and appealing to the heart (Kotter, Leading Change 66). In other words, a vision must make sense both intellectually and emotionally. The common goal should be imaginable, desirable, feasible, focused, flexible, and

communicable (72). A vision gives an organization focus. The organization's vision

serves as the fundamental reason for the corporation's existence. A guiding vision sets

the boundaries of activity so that the corporation does not prodigally expend resources

trying to decide between correct or incorrect action (Oster 32).

Visionary Leadership and Goals

Jim Collins and Jerry I. Porras, in their foundational research that describes how

some companies produce continual growth while others do not, discovered that

companies with visionary leadership usually have a bold mission, what Collins and

Porras call BHAGs or "Big Hairy Audacious Goals" (Built to Last 93). A BHAG or

visionary goal is the "big picture" of a preferred future set in a long time frame of ten to

thirty years or more. A BHAG must also be clear, compelling, be easy to grasp, and be

able to be translated from words to pictures ("Building" 42). Such a vivid description of

the BHAG makes the common goal obvious to everyone in the organization. A BHAG is

not randomly chosen but rather is connected to the core values and overall purpose of the

organization.

A corporate vision functions on three different levels: a strategic level, a tactical

level, and a personal level (Bennis 186). The strategic level is the organization's overall

philosophy and serves as the big picture for the corporation. The tactical level of a vision

describes how the overall philosophy is put into action and is reflected in the product the

organization creates. The personal level of vision refers to how the overall philosophy is

manifested in the behavior of each employee and is reflected in the daily activities and

attitudes of each person in the organization.

The visionary idea is the engine that drives an organization, but it need not be a

complex or sophisticated thought. In many cases, the vision is a simple idea (Oster 44).

For example, McDonald's Web site states that their vision is to be "the world's best quick

service restaurant experience." According to their Web site, Nike seeks to "bring

inspiration and innovation to every athlete in the world." The Ford Motor Company Web

site indicates that Ford desires to "become the world's leading consumer company for

automotive products and services." These examples demonstrate that even the world's

leading corporations have grandiose, yet simply stated, visions that guide them. All

corporate visions must be deeply rooted in the reality of the product or service they offer.

Simplicity is essential for visions to be open-ended enough to allow for individuals to act

upon them and to account for changing circumstances (Kotter, Leading Change 76).

The appropriate vision has potential power for an organization. Such a vision can

foster commitment, energize people, create meaning in the work individuals perform,

establish a criterion of excellence, and build a bridge between the present and the future

(Nanus 16-17). A leader's vision serves as the motivating force for sojourning toward the

future. In describing this vision-driven journey, Schaller uses the analogy of a pilgrim, a

traveler on a journey to a specific destination:

> The pilgrim is motivated to keep moving down what appears to be an
> endless road by a vision before him. Without the vision, sooner or later, he
> will succumb to the temptation to go over and sit in the shade and rest his
> weary bones. Once he does, unless he perceives a new vision, he is
> unlikely ever to move out of the shade. (Parish Planning 34)

Such a vision motivates the movement toward a preferred future.

Visionary Leadership and Teams

Although a leader in an organization must effectively communicate and embody

the guiding vision, they do not necessarily need to be the sole author of such a vision. An

organization has many leaders that function in various critical roles within the hierarchy of leadership and, thus, many people may contribute to the authorship of a vision (Senge et al. 16). Visionary leaders, however, do need to serve as the steward of the vision. This view implies that visionary leaders often serve as mentors, coaches, and stewards in an organization (18). Being the steward of the vision requires leaders to allow others to partner with them to fulfill the vision. The concept of leader, as steward of the vision, is best accomplished by the use of teams.

Jon R. Katzenbach and Douglas K. Smith define a team as a "small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable" (45). When people join together to accomplish a common task or achieve a common goal, they are much more effective than if they had worked independently. A true team achieves objectives through mutual, cooperative efforts (Furr, Bonem, and Herrington 17). By working together, a team can more efficiently steward an organization's overall vision for a preferred future.

Communication is imperative in teams. Often individuals or groups in an organization do not have an accurate understanding of why certain actions are taken or how their work fits into the overall system. When a team leader is able to attach meaning and purpose to events, especially system-changing events, team productivity is enhanced. When working as a team, mutual accountability to one another fosters a level of performance unattained by individual efforts. Such accountability enables a high degree of alignment with the vision and with the work of others on the team. Table 2.3 lists ten leadership functions for enhancing the productivity of teams in an organization.

Table 2.3. Leadership Functions for Enhancing the Productivity of Teams
_____

Leadership Function	Description of Function
Function one	Interpreting the meaning of events.
Function two	Creating alignment between objectives and strategies fosters productivity..
Function three	Building commitment to tasks and creating an optimistic atmosphere enables people to better work together toward a common goal.
Function four	Building mutual trust and cooperation enhances productivity.
Function five	Creating a collective identity allows people to take pride in their organization.
Function six	Organizing and coordinating activities.
Function seven	Encouraging and facilitating collective learning opportunities.
Function eight	Providing people with the appropriate resources and support.
Function nine	Developing and empowering people.
Function ten	Promoting social justice and morality.

_____
Source: Yukl 439-40.

While teamwork has proven to be effective in many organizations, human nature can potentially inhibit the success of a team working within a given system. People who work closely on a team have the ability to develop strong emotional bonds with one another. When people work and live together, conflict is inevitable. Such conflict can either be positive or negative, depending on how it is worked out among members of the team. The close relationships of a team have the potential to thwart the positive conflict necessary for organizational growth to occur. People on a team can be so highly dependent on each other emotionally that they are unable to engage in the healthy conflict

needed for an organization to pursue its vision (Herrington, Creech, and Taylor 45).

Teams that engage in positive conflict are able to work together to fulfill the shared

vision.

Visionary Leadership and Risk Taking

John Wooden, a legendary college basketball coach, made his mark as a leader

coaching his teams at UCLA to ten national titles in a twelve-year span during the 1960s

and 70s. Part of Wooden's philosophy was that winners make the most mistakes. His

theory was that the team that commits the majority of mistakes will probably win because

the doer makes mistakes while the team that is mistake-free does little or nothing

(Wooden and Jamison 73). While not all leaders who make mistakes are successful,

leaders who are willing to take risks will inevitably make mistakes in the pursuit of

success.

Two basic ingredients in the makeup of a leader are curiosity and daring (Bennis

41). Anytime a leader enacts change in an organization, it involves taking risks (Quinn

219). Sometimes taking risks means breaking free from widely accepted norms imbedded

in longstanding traditions and rules. Visionary leaders are often driven to take risks by

their belief of the guiding vision and are so passionately consumed with the vision that

they are willing to step out into an unknown future in order to create and shape that

future. Visionary leaders usually exhibit a belief in themselves and a passion for the job.

A belief in oneself provides leaders with the needed self-confidence to move into the

future and to convince others to join them. A leader's passion for the job frequently

provides the fuel and the focus to drive the organization's vision.

Visionary Leadership and Innovation

Visionary leadership is innovative in that it pushes the envelope of what is, in order to create what will be. Because innovation is a key to the future of any organization, a visionary leader is always seeking to learn. Warren Bennis suggests three components of innovative learning: anticipation, listening, and participation (76-77). To be innovative, a leader must be active and imaginative rather than passive and habitual. An innovative leader learns by thinking outside the box. Also, an innovative leader learns by listening to others. Giving another person the chance to speak what they want to say can result in accomplishing a great deal more in much less time (Senge et al. 154). An innovative leader also learns through participation. Creative visionary leaders understand that participating in the activities of an organization allows them to shape events, rather than to be shaped by them.

Leaders can foster a more innovative style of leadership by strategically engaging in various activities (Barker 29). Leaders can become more innovative by being aware of their influence or by obtaining the ability to understand what influences their own perceptions. Leaders also enhance innovation by becoming divergent thinkers or having the ability to discover more than one right answer by being able to see the "both/and" of a situation. Furthermore, leaders who can integrate and prioritize a variety of information become more innovative. Another key to innovation is mapping. When leaders learn to engage in mapping, or the ability to diagram ways of moving from the present reality to the preferred future, they become more innovative because they have a clear picture of where they are headed. Leaders who prove to be innovative leaders excel at imaging. They have the capacity to picture in words, metaphors, and models what the future will

look like.

Visionary Leadership and Trust

Twenty-first century organizations must be intentional about the phenomenon of trust. Countless corporations have been destroyed because of an abuse of and the consequential breakdown of trust. A lack of trust is one of the leading factors in resisting change (Yukl 274). The absence of trust in an organization results in fear and anxiety, which may be the most difficult and most frequent challenge in initiating and sustaining change (Senge et al. 243). Organizations often possess a low-grade anxiety resulting from distrust of its leadership. Leaders need to learn to pay attention to such anxiety in their organization and work to establish credibility with those they lead (Herrington, Creech, and Taylor 39). Being attentive to the presence of fear and anxiety in others demonstrates that a leader is interested in not only the welfare of the organization but also the well-being of the people in the organization. Trust is built when people express a genuine interest in each other (Senge et al. 156).

Trust breeds teamwork and enables diverse groups of people to work as a coalition toward the same objective. Visionary leaders embody the vision by basing all of their behaviors consistently on the vision (Nanus 139). Such consistent behavior fosters a sense of integrity both in the leader and in the vision. This sense of integrity is the basis of trust (Bennis 41). One way to increase trust and show integrity is to communicate regularly and intentionally communicate with others in the organization. Effective communication not only creates an awareness of the importance of working together but also acts to preserve a common corporate vision (DePree 106-07). When leaders do what they say and honor their commitments and promises, trust is fostered within the

organization.

Visionary Leadership and Vision Management

Much has been written about the differences in leadership and management. In 1983, Kouzes and Posner began conducting an extensive study of hundreds of leaders and managers in a variety of fields. Kouzes and Posner discovered that leaders modeled fundamental principles of leadership. Leaders challenge the current process because they are discontent with the status quo and are driven to change current reality. Leaders also have the ability to inspire a shared vision and enable others to join them in concentrating on a common goal. Visionary leaders invest resources into other people that provide the freedom for people to act. These leaders understand the importance of creating a system where others are given permission to move forward with ideas that coincide with the vision. In addition, visionary leaders model the way. Such leaders lead by incarnating the core values of the vision. Visionary leaders encourage the heart. Motivation serves as a major aspect of the role of leadership, and visionary leaders strive, even through simple actions, to maintain the emotional energy of their organizations (9-14).

While managing and leading both involve the oversight of others in an organization, significant differences between the two roles have been observed. Management is involved in planning and budgeting, organizing and staffing, as well as controlling and problem solving, whereas leadership works to establish direction, align people and structures, and motivate and inspire (Kotter, <u>Leading Change</u> 26). Bennis and Nanus focus on a crucial distinction: "Managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing" (21). Managers have often been trained to maintain the status quo while leaders are compelled to challenge it.

Leadership has often been portrayed in the literature as more important than management; however, current authors are beginning to debunk this idea. Both visionary leadership and visionary management are needed for an organization to fulfill a guiding vision because changes in organizations are long-term and deeply rooted in the structures and practices of the system (Senge et al. 18). Whereas visionary leaders are often called upon to dream a guiding vision, visionary managers ensure the vision is manifested in the daily reality of the organization. Many organizations continue to operate with a Lone Ranger CEO who casts the overall vision for the company. Such a model has been dubbed the "genius with a thousand helpers" whereby the organization is an arena for the talents of a talented leader (Collins 46). Nevertheless, the "genius with a thousand helpers" view of leadership is proving ineffective. Furthermore, the emphasis placed on teamwork implies that many people in an organization are required to work together both to dream and implement a vision.

Organizations in the twenty-first century call for a more balanced approach to change requiring a collaboration of visionary leadership and visionary management. Change in an organization requires careful attention to all the components of the system. Managing change becomes essential in this process. Managers of a change initiative maintain the conversation between those leading the change and those who implement the new methods (Duck 58). In addition, visionary managers monitor the context of the change initiative in an organization as well as the emotional responses of people affected by the change.

Visionary Leadership from a Christian Perspective

Much has been written in recent years about the significant role of visionary

leadership in the Church. Christian authors have echoed what secular writers have said about visionary leadership; however, they have interpreted the topic through a biblical worldview. In many ways, authors writing for the Church have added the critical element of faith. As Galloway so aptly states, "Vision is faith with a picture attached" (<u>Taking Risks</u> 11). Vision is an image of a preferred future or the ability to see tomorrow, today. Many have successfully argued that now, more than ever before, the people of God are desperately in need visionary leadership. As local congregations, as well as denominational judicatories, struggle to develop, communicate, and maintain a sense of purposeful direction in their ministries, a noticeable lack of leaders exist who possess a transforming vision. Sunday after Sunday, year after year, tens of thousands of local congregations go through the motions of an irrelevant routine that lost touch with society decades ago. Meanwhile, millions of people face a Christ-less eternity because few attempt to cast a vision powerful enough to transform those stagnant congregations into authentic, disciple-making churches. Without someone to cast a guiding vision, God's purposes for the Church go unrealized because nothing significant happens in a local congregation until someone opens up to receiving God's vision for them (<u>On-Purpose Leadership</u> 17).

Visionary Leadership That Transforms

Ford argues that the world is hungry for a new kind of leadership, what he calls "transformational leadership" (21). In essence, transformational leaders possess a vision and a passion for change, not change for change sake, but changes for a better future. Ford juxtaposes this transformational leadership, the kind that seeks to move people into uncharted waters, with "transactional leadership," which seeks rewards for maintaining

the status quo (21). Ford compares the two kinds of leadership:

> Transactional leaders work within the situation; transformational leaders change the situation. Transactional leaders accept what can be talked about; transformational leaders change what can be talked about. Transactional leaders accept the rules and values; transformational leaders change them. Transactional leaders talk about payoffs; transformational leaders talk about goals. Transactional leaders bargain; transformational leaders symbolize. (22)

Transformational leaders are change agents who do not seek to maintain the status quo. Galloway submits that a transformational leader in the Church possesses a different set of skills than those who maintain the current reality. According to Galloway, these kinds of leaders possess the gift of leadership, have an authentic walk with God, and become a visionary leader. They also develop an appropriate sense of inadequacy, have supportive families, and have a holy discontent or are not satisfied with the status quo. Finally, these leaders also demonstrate a great passion for the lost, show commitment to core values, learn not to take negative reactions personally, and love all people, especially those who resist the change being implemented (Leading in Times of Change 12-14).

To be change agents, Christian leaders must clearly understand both the congregations they serve and the ministry contexts in which they serve to discern where the burdens are located. A thorough study of the congregation and the community help to determine what burdens are being carried in the hearts of parishioners as well as those being borne by those who live in the surrounding community. My wife's grandmother used to say that she could tell her spiritual life was lacking when she stopped having burdens for other people. Stanley says that burdens for other people and specific situations are the beginning of a vision:

> A God-ordained vision will begin as a concern. You will hear or see something that gets your attention. A thought related to your future will

generate an emotion. Something will bother you about the way things are
or the ways things are headed. Unlike many passing concerns, these will
stick with you. You will find yourself thinking about them in your free
time. You may lose sleep over them. You won't be able to let them go
because they won't let you go. (19)

Although any Christian can receive a vision from God and should seek such, the

responsibility of a church's guiding vision belongs to the pastor and other significant

leaders of the congregation. A pastor needs to incarnate what the church is to be by

attitude and behavior (Galloway, Leading with Vision 37). The visionary leader's job is

to create and shape the ethos of the community of faith. Without such a defining and

driving vision, a community of faith will never become what God desires it to be. As the

writer of Proverbs 29:18 states, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (KJV).

Unless God's people have a clear understanding of the direction in which they are

headed, the probability of a successful journey is greatly hindered (Barna, Power of

Vision 11).

Ford argues that "vision is the stuff of leadership" (99). Enabling a church to

execute its God-given mission is the essence of Christian leadership. Ephesians 4:11-13

is a reminder that leaders in the congregation are meant to serve as enabling forces that

allow others to serve in the context of God's vision for a local church:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be
evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people
for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all
reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and
become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.
(NIV)

Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are all positions of leadership in the

Christian community. The act of preparing God's people for works of service is the

"stuff" of vision.

Visionary Leadership and Core Values

A significant aspect of visionary leadership is the establishment of core values. Values refer to what congregations believe to be worth their time, energy, and resources. These guiding principles serve as a foundation for all congregations do. Core values indicate what is important to the group. According to Anderson, values give meaning to behavior:

> Behavior is what we do and the way we do it, while values explain why we do what we do. Values govern our underlying thoughts, attitudes, and decisions which result in behavior. Even though we can't see values, they are real and powerful, determining human behavior. (31)

Furthermore, the values that drive the behavior of people in congregations are often unspoken and unconsciously held.

Every successful organization functions by a set of core values. In an organization such as a church, which deals with the eternal issues pertaining to the kingdom of God, operating from a set of biblical core values becomes crucial. In speaking to the need for a church to function out of core values, Malphurs suggests that values determine ministry distinctives, dictate personal involvement, communicate what is important, embrace positive change, influence overall behavior, and inspire people to action. Furthermore, values enhance credible leadership, contribute to ministry success, determine the ministry vision, are constant, are passionate, are biblical, and drive the ministry (12-42). Without these core values, a church will not minister with a sense of direction or purpose. Rather, it will seek to do what it has always done with no desire to change, even if what it does is irrelevant. Likewise, if a church has no guiding core values, it may also add ministries that are ineffective for their context and for the gifts and abilities that exist in the

congregation. As Galloway says, "Make the main thing the main thing. Real achievement comes by focusing on the right things and doing them over and over" (On-Purpose Leadership 31). Core values allow a church to focus on the main thing.

Developing a set of core values gives direction for a church's vision and allows it to accomplish its mission. Jesus set forth the mission of the Church when he instructed his followers to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20a, NIV). Making disciples is the mission of the Church. This "Great Commission" is the Church's BHAG, its Big Hairy Audacious Goal. No goal is more audacious than that of communicating God's salvation with those who have never heard or believed it and sharing the life-changing, need-meeting love of Christ with others. Likewise, no goal is more audacious than the mission to participate in God's activity in human affairs with the goal of transforming the world.

A vision describes how a church will go about accomplishing the mission. Vision is specific to a given church and "puts feet" on the mission (Barna, Power of Vision 39). It can vary from context to context but is always guided by a set of core values. For example, Rick Warren and the Saddleback Community Church seek to accomplish the mission of making disciples through what they call the five Ms: magnify, mission, membership, maturity, and ministry (107). The first value, magnify, refers to celebrating God's presence in worship. Mission places an emphasis on communicating God's word through evangelism. The third value, membership, serves to incorporate God's family, the Church, into people's relational structures. Members at Saddleback are educated and enabled to grow toward spiritual maturity through discipleship training. The fifth value,

ministry, demonstrates God's love through service.

Likewise, Stanley and North Point Community Church in Alpharetta, Georgia, have set forth a three-step vision to accomplish their mission. According to the church's Web site, North Point seeks to "lead people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ by creating environments where people are encouraged and equipped to pursue intimacy with God, community with insiders, and influence with outsiders." North Point's vision is to create three primary environments, which they call the foyer, the living room, and the kitchen. The church's worship services are the "foyer" and serve as the entry point for people to come into the church community. The "living room" is for establishing friendships and is the environment for guests to be made comfortable and to find connections with people in the church who have similar interests and life experiences. The purpose of the "kitchen" is to be the atmosphere for the building of Christian community through small groups.

The West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church has set forth a vision to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus, which is referred to as the Core Process for Making Disciples. West Ohio more clearly states its vision for every congregation to be a "healthy, growing, spiritually vital, risk-taking center for making and equipping disciples of Jesus Christ for the purpose of transforming the world" (West Ohio News 3).The Core Process consists of four parts: reaching and receiving, relating people to God, nurturing people through discipleship, and sending out for mission and service. Other language used to describe this core process has been radical hospitality, passionate worship, faith-forming relationships and experiences, and risk-taking service. In essence, the vision involves the core values of evangelism, conversion, discipleship, and service and serves

as the primary tasks for the conference. Although various churches implement the core process in different ways, it serves as a guiding vision for the conference.

If an organization's core values are forgotten, the implementation of a vision becomes an empty set of motions, doing good things for the sake of doing good things (Barna, Turning Vision 157). Part of the role of the visionary leader, then, is to work with others to catch God's vision and continually lift up the core values to the community of faith. In essence, once the vision is caught, it must be continually re-caught by both the leader and the community.

Visionary Leadership and the Origin of Vision

A Christian visionary leader knows the origin of the vision. True vision comes from God and is given to his people to enable them to know his mind better and do his will (Barna, Power of Vision 12). God is the author of vision, and every disciple of Jesus is taught by God (Jer. 31:34) and inspired by God (Joel 2:28). Tim Eugene Barton discovered that a God-given vision is conveyed through a variety of methods: Scripture, the Holy Spirit's direction through a still small voice, prayer, people, circumstances, and reading/studying/thinking (120-32). A Christian visionary leader remains focused on the vision God has given as well as on the One who has given the vision.

The God who spoke creation into existence is also the God who imparts vision to those who pay attention. When a leader is distracted or too caught up in the vision itself rather than the source, the vision can become lost. Barna suggests a variety of reasons why a visionary may lose sight of a God-given vision (Turning Vision 157). For example, the visionary may become out of touch with God, may experience burnout, or may have an absence of accountability. The leader may be impatient or egocentric. Core values

may be ignored, or progress may not be evaluated. The leader may engage in inappropriate lifestyles or be involved in extreme conflict. The organization may be structured inappropriately for the vision, or the vision itself may be outdated. These examples serve to show the primary need for the visionary leader to stay focused on God. Barna says, "Vision is a gift from God, but it never replaces God" (122). The leader who seeks God will be provided with a fresh understanding of the vision.

Not only must visionary leaders remain in touch with God, leaders must stay in contact with people. John C. Maxwell writes, "Great leaders know the desires of the people they lead" (22). Visionary leaders at all levels of church leadership must learn to listen to those they are leading. Such leadership requires effective listening skills that complement the ability to communicate the vision. Although God entrusts a vision of a preferred future to visionary leaders, it requires a community of faith to live out the vision.

Visionary Leadership and Faithfulness

God is constantly calling people to join him in a kingdom enterprise that requires and enables faith (Galloway, Leading with Vision 158). God does not want the Church to do anything spectacular; rather, he is simply looking for faithfulness from those seeking to participate in his kingdom. Jesus asked, "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8b, NIV). Likewise, the world is waiting for the Church to be what the Church was created to be: the representation of God's kingdom on earth. Even in a postmodern culture of cynicism and doubt, the world still expects both integrity and transforming power from the Church. When a church fails to live out the vision God has for it, God's reputation is damaged by the people who represent him.

Transformational leaders that are faithful to God are essential in order to see God's kingdom manifested in the life of the Church.

Vision is never about today; rather, it is always about tomorrow. If a church never learns to view its past as a memory that influences the future, as opposed to memorabilia that clings to yesterday, tomorrow will be no better than today. A God-given vision calls a congregation to walk by faith and not by sight and requires the community of faith to live the future, today.

A Living Hope: Biblical and Theological Underpinnings for Leadership and Vision

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate a theology of hope vital to the countercultural witness of the Church in general and to the impact of Christian visionary leadership in particular. This theology of hope is based on the book of 1 Peter, which serves to remind the Church of the living hope it possesses as a result of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Such a hope enables the Church to live as a countercultural witness in an increasingly hostile and pagan world. In addition to 1 Peter, examinations of 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1:5-9, and Luke 12:42-48 further illumine the subjects of faithful Christian leadership. The exegesis of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1:5-9 details biblical characteristics of Christian leadership, and Luke 12:42-48 deals with the importance of Christian leaders being faithful stewards of God's vision. The theme of hope is identified as the foundational element for faith and renewal in the Christian community.

This world is not optimistic. Oftentimes the images seen, the news heard, and the words shared are negative. Many find speaking of hope an increasingly difficult task in the current culture marked by terrorism, scandal, and cynicism. In many ways the language of society today is marked by hostility and violence. The voice of hopelessness

is heard from the daily car bombings of Baghdad to the habitual hostility of a Jerry Springer show. Violence is a form of communication that expresses the hopelessness pervading the world. Ultimately what is being communicated by this hostility is the great contradiction that exists between the desired future and the experienced present reality. Violence is an expression of hopelessness that communicates the frustration of the chasm separating what is to be from what is (Jensen 44). The low sense of community and the moral, political, and religious struggles of society have led to despair. Many of the institutions and icons of the past that enabled people to look forward to the future have either long since vanished or, worse, lost their power to provide a hopeful outlook. Truly this world is not an optimistic.

Perhaps a useful metaphor to illustrate this negative trend is the game of baseball. America's pastime in prior generations offered a reprise from the routines and events of life. It provided an opportunity for people to escape, to dream, and to hope. Even if the hometown team lost, the fans could still say with hope, "Wait until next year." This attitude of hopefulness has been replaced with a more cynical consumer mind-set, where players change teams on a regular basis opting for the biggest available contract, where entire teams can be world champions one season and be dismantled the next, and where only certain teams from larger markets have a legitimate chance of winning the World Series. Times have changed and baseball has changed. An institution that once infused the culture with hope, in many ways, now resembles the rest of the world: pessimistic and uncertain about what tomorrow holds.

The same can be said of the local church. For many communities across the landscape, the church was the center of community life. Pews were filled on Sunday

mornings, and people knew that the church could be counted on to provide for those who found themselves in need. For many, such an experience is not so anymore. Many churches find their membership in decline and their influence in the community waning. No longer the center of community life, churches often find themselves on the fringe of society competing with soccer games and shopping centers for participants. This trend is cause for many local churches to become hopeless. In light of this current reality, the church must learn to reclaim one of the most profound truths that God has offered to the world: hope. In this new era of society, the church must rediscover its role of being a community of faith offering hope to an increasingly dark and hostile world.

In the film The Shawshank Redemption, which takes place in a maximum security prison, Morgan Freeman's character, "Red," listens to his friend, "Andy," who speaks about the hope he has of being free again. After listening intently for a few moments, Red looks at Andy and says, "Hope is a dangerous thing." Red was right. Hope is a dangerous thing; it is dangerous because it is powerful. Hope is not wishful thinking or a pie-in-the-sky belief; rather, hope is based on the conviction that something will happen in the future based on what has happened in the past. The hopeful future of the church, which is called to live as a witness to Christ in an increasingly hostile world, rests on the fact that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

The Church as Recipients of a Living Hope: 1 Peter 1:3

God is not distant and unknowable but is imminent and self-revealing. He has stepped into human history and revealed himself perfectly in the person of his Son Jesus Christ (Mounce 11). As the writer of Hebrews said, "God has in these last days spoken to us, not through an occasional prophetic voice or vision but by his own Son" (Heb. 1:1-2,

NIV). In Christ, God has shown himself to be both merciful and mighty. God, in his mercy, offered his Son's life as atonement for sin, and in his might, raised him from the dead. The prophets foretold the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and the Christ event is evidence that God is faithful to do exactly what he said he would do. God's consistency in faithfully fulfilling his promises lies at the heart of hope. The hope of the church rests on God's reliability or faithfulness to do for believers what he did for his Son. The living hope to which Peter refers in 1 Peter 1:3 is based on the fact that God raised Jesus from the dead and on the reasonable inference that, if God raised Jesus, he will also raise all who trust in Jesus (Marshall 37).

Because of God's great mercy, the Church has been born anew into a living hope. It is living because Jesus conquered death. Without Jesus and the reality of the resurrection, the Church would have no valid reason for hope, which is precisely Peter's point. Because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, the Church's hope is a living hope. Jesus' experience of new life after death offers to the Church new birth into a living hope. It is not only the hope of a promised future, but also one of the here and now. Eternal life is a present experience for those who follow Christ. A good reason for the Church's hope lies in trusting God not only for the future but also the fulfillment of God's promises in the present (Marshall 37). God's faithfulness in the past has not only granted the Church a bright hope for tomorrow but also offers strength for today. The concept of a living hope mentioned by Peter is intended to offer encouragement to the Christian community (Kelly 48). To the first century audience, such a message was a call to endure in light of current struggles. To the twenty-first century audience, the call of living hope serves the same purpose. It points to the promises of God and to the reality of

God's abiding presence in the life of the Church. It is not a dead hope that is insubstantial but is living and fruitful.

Living hope is meant to be a call to holy mission as the Church lives out the work of God which began with Christ. Such a hope offered to the Church by God is one that makes a difference in the world's current situation and allows people to live with hope in the present being confident about the future. This truth offers a radical alternative way of life compared to the culture that has no hope and sees no reason for being optimistic: "The Church's mission looks with 'living hope' toward the completion of the work God has begun in Jesus Christ, and this hope is firmly established by God in raising Jesus from the dead" (Guder 46). The essential message of hope entrusted to the Church has its source in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. By that one event in history, the entire human situation has been changed and is being changed.

The Church as Countercultural Witness: 1 Peter 2:11-17

The church is to live out its hope by faith. In a world marked by hostility and increasingly pagan beliefs, the church is to function as a countercultural witness. Peter refers to Christians as "aliens and strangers in the world" (1 Pet. 1:11, NIV). This world is not the Church's home. Christians are just passing through, pressing toward the home that exists in heaven. Christians are to live in such a way that reflects this transitory citizenship. Certainly a case can be made that Christians are God's people, a status that makes believers somehow different from other people (Marshall 80). Such a status does not mean that Christians conceal their true identity and live a reclusive lifestyle. On the contrary, as temporary residents of this world, Christians to "live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds

and glorify God on the day he visits us" (1 Pet. 1:12, NIV). The Church has an

undeniable calling to go into the world living as a godly alternative to what is and

demonstrating to all not only what could be but what will be. In such a hopeless world

marked by hostility and violence, the Church is to live out the hope given by God through

the resurrection of Jesus. Living out that hope enables the Church to be a countercultural

witness.

In order for this countercultural witness to be effective, reform is needed. The

Church must continually be converted so as to respond to the gospel of Christ in ever new

and more comprehensive ways. In America, for example, the church has existed in an era

of Christendom and has been perpetuated by a kind of civic faith in which the church

served as the religious ethos of the community, was supported by the culture, and served

a useful role in society (Robinson 25). This era has come to an end, but much of the

Western church has failed to realize it. Former roles such as being the social conscience,

the instrument of aid, and the center of family and community life have waned, and the

church of the twenty-first century must begin to resemble the church of the first century.

In this new era, the church must not focus on a civic faith but on human transformation

(33). Such a countercultural witness seeks to bear witness to a restored relationship with

God and understands its mission as transforming people in light of God's grace.

Specifically Peter calls the Church to submit to those in authority, responding to

criticism and persecution with love and prayer and showing proper respect to everyone.

Peter's words serve as an extreme call to countercultural living as such behavior is rare in

a culture defined by self-interest. David L. McKenna refers to the widespread self-interest

of society as the "Radical Self." The Church must respond to this cultural shift:

> Self-interest has become a dominant and pervasive force shaping our character and our culture during the decades since the 1960's. One observer describes the changing scene as a shift in the image of the "self-made man" to the "man-made self." And the influence of self-interest does not stop with individuals. Corporations and governmental institutions are designing their strategies around the assumptions of radical individualism. Most troubling, however, is the impact of self-interest on our primary institutions-home, church, and school. So as radical self-interest dominates our character and pervades our institutions, Christians will find themselves engaged in spiritual conflict. (47)

The Church is called to order itself so as to live out its witness in a countercultural manner. Peter's direct instruction to the Church is to learn to submit. Submission is the opposite of self-interest. Instead of seeking to serve the self or even to preserve the self, Christians are to submit to authority. As citizens of another world, the Church is to exemplify godly citizenship while living in this world. Because the Church believes that every person is created in the image of God and every person is redeemable, Christians can live with the understanding that every person is worthy of appropriate respect and dignity. Furthermore, because the Church knows that regardless of what is happening in the present, God is at work in the world.

The culture of today sees the future as a hopeless end; however, the Church as a countercultural witness proclaims an endless hope. Without hope, the world lives in fear, but with hope, the Church lives in faith. The violence that has been witnessed within the last century, most recently and profoundly in contemporary American culture on 11 September 2001, has threatened humanity's sense of security. No one feels safe anymore. In light of the violence and hostility that is experienced in the world, the culture responds with despair. The Church as a countercultural witness is called to respond with hope. Only by investing itself in a living hope can the Church live in such a counter-cultural way.

The Church's greatest witness comes from living faithfully and hopefully in full view of the world. When the culture sees the reality of authentic faith and hope in action, people recognize such authentic behavior as something distinctive. A living hope enables the Church to be optimistic about the future because Christians ultimately know what the future holds: resurrection. A living hope is the perfect countercultural witness to a pagan world.

Christian hope is the power to begin life anew (Berquist 185). The Christian story is one of God conquering evil with good and defeating death with life. This story is one of God reconciling the world unto himself through the death and resurrection of his Son. The Church's story is one of God's redemption raising the ones created in his image to new life. Because of its hopeless despair, the world turns a deaf ear to this story, but through the living hope that God offers, the Church boldly proclaims the hopeful reality of its faith in a countercultural witness. Perhaps the Church's living hope is appropriately summed up in the hymn "This is My Father's World", which offers this reminder: "Though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet" (144).

The Church as Steward of God's Grace: 1 Peter 4:7-11

Living as a Christian, especially in an increasingly violent and hostile world, is a life and death affair. Peter reminds his readers in 1 Peter 4:7 that the end of all things is near. Human history is moving to an ultimate climax. In Christian theology, the end of all things is referred to as eschatology. When Peter refers to the end of all things, he uses the Christ event as his point of reference. Christian hope perceives in the cross of Christ the anticipation of the end of all things (Berquist 178). With the advent of Jesus, the Word made flesh, God was inaugurating a new era in the kingdom of heaven and in human

history. Jesus' death on the cross provided the final atonement for human sin and made it possible for human beings to no longer be separated from God. Human beings have been given access to the Father through the death of the Son. Furthermore, Jesus' resurrection from the dead, the Church's reason for a living hope, was the cataclysmic event that signaled God was indeed making all things new (Marshall 140). As 1 Corinthians 15:20 teaches, "Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (NIV). The resurrection of Jesus exemplified God's power to deliver humanity from the evil that is so active in the world. The Church exists in the last days of human history as the living witness to a world that is slowly, but surely, passing away. Such a reality is indeed a life and death affair.

Because of the serious nature of the Church's calling, Christians must be clear minded and self-controlled. Individually this instruction is of obvious importance, but taken collectively it becomes an imperative mandate for the life of the Church. As the world is confronted with the hostile culture of terror and violence, the Church is to allow its living hope to foster a clear-minded and self-controlled way of life. Even as the world is faced with the end of all things, the Church is not to see history's conclusion as a terrifying aspect but one that is full of hope for God's people (Kelly 177).

Specifically in light of the church's mission and the nature of the times, Peter is calling on the Church to live soberly "so that they can pray" (Mounce 69; Marshall 142). No doubt the apostle recalls the time in which Jesus asked him to watch and pray in the Garden of Gethsemane, a task he was too sleepy to accomplish. Peter's inability to be clear minded and self-controlled in such a crucial time led to the denial of his commitment to Christ. Because the Church exists at the end of all things, being clear

minded and self-controlled is vital to the task to both live in and live out the love of God. Such a call to watchfulness and irreproachable behavior offers credence to the Church's countercultural witness.

This hopeful witness is characterized by love. The commandment to love is the highest priority of the church. Above all Christians are to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" and to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:37, 39, NIV). In addition, Jesus left his followers with a new commandment to "love one another" as he loved them (John 13:34, NIV). For the Church to exemplify its living hope and to be a countercultural witness in an increasingly pagan world, demonstrating love for each other becomes imperative. After all, God has demonstrated his love by giving his Son to the world, and through Jesus the world has become recipients of God's indescribable grace. Living a life of love in a clear-minded and self-controlled way is imperative for those who have personally received God's grace and have been entrusted with sharing that grace with others.

As stewards of God's grace, the Church must be ever ready to reform itself in order to carry out its mission. The Church has been guilty of reducing the gospel to a manageable religion concerned with self-preservation (Guder 181). Reformation, however, is not the discarding of the old in order to embrace the new. Rather, reformation is the realization of constancy through change. As the past is recaptured and contextualized in the present, faithful stewardship takes place.

The Church has been entrusted with the message of the gospel and thus must call people to experience personal change and not just to the changes that come through institutional reform (McManus 197). This message is the good news of God's reconciling

grace. Paul's letter to the church in Corinth coveys this truth:

> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. (2 Cor. 5:18-20, NIV)

The Church sends a variety of messages to the world; however, the one message for which the church was created is God's redeeming grace. First Peter 4:10 calls the church to be "good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (NRSV). In Greek culture, the steward or trustee was responsible for managing the estate of his master and was responsible for distributing wages and food to other members of the household (Mounce 71; Kelly 180).

Likewise the Church has been given the responsibility of being stewards of the gospel. How Christians live, how they relate to one another, and how they respond to the world around them is determined by how faithful they are in living as stewards of God's grace. As people of a living hope, the Church offers a way of life contrary to the very nature of the world, one based on love and grace. The Church is to live out its witness, ordered in a clear-minded and self-controlled way, as stewards of God's manifold grace.

A Theology of Hope: A Model for Christian Leadership and Vision

Human beings need hope. A person may possibly live without faith and even without love, but one cannot live without an implicit hope that moves one forward (Downey 63; Lane 59). Hope emerges out of a certain level of dissatisfaction with what is presently being experienced and initiates new dreams and visions for what could be in the future. Nevertheless, hope as a fundamental Christian theology is more than simply being

optimistic or thinking positively. Christian hope is rooted in Christ. Specifically,

Christian hope has as its source the death and resurrection of Christ and the return of

Christ.

The Christian understanding of eschatology, or the study of the things expected to

occur at the end of history, is the doctrine of hope (Meeks 8). Inherent in this doctrine is

that the same God who sent his Son to redeem the sin of the world will also send his Son

to reclaim the redeemed at the end of the world. Eschatology is God's plan for the

establishment and victory of the Church in the last things of human history (Reasoner

13).

Although Christian eschatology deals with the study of the future, it does not seek

to speak of the future as much as it seeks to announce the hopeful reality of the future

with all of its possibilities (Moltmann 17). Grounded in the reality of Christ's resurrection

and the promise of Christ's return, eschatology is based on things that have already

occurred as well as things that are not yet completed. Even a cursory reading of the New

Testament demonstrates that it was written in an atmosphere pervaded by eschatology.

Early Christianity was rooted in the paradoxical conviction that the last things had

"already" occurred, even though they were "not yet" fully completed. For example,

Jesus' resurrection from the dead, an event that had already occurred when the New

Testament was being written, was understood as the beginning of the final resurrection of

the dead, which is an event yet to take place. This belief was at the heart of the early

Church's hope and shaped its understanding of God, its message of salvation, and its

mission to the world in which it existed.

The Church lives out its mission within the dialectical tension of the already and

the not yet. While hope enables Christians to look forward to the future that God has

planned, it also allows for faithful living in the present with all of its struggles. Such a

hope is the expression of Christian realism, rooted in what God has already accomplished

and confident that God will complete the work of salvation (Guder 66).

A theology of Christian hope transforms the Christian community in which it is

lived out. Whenever hope is developed, it causes not rest but unrest, not patience but

impatience because those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is

(Moltmann 21). Hope enables the Church to expect something better, both now and in the

future. Such expectation leads the Church to see its mission in the world as not only

bringing individuals to faith in Christ but transforming the very world in which it exists.

Living out the hope of the Christian faith in ways that far exceed the benefit of the

individual, but instead benefit the surrounding culture, is a distinctive of Wesleyan

theology. Such a theology of hope speaks to the praxis of the Church that seeks to both

minister to the specific needs of the poor and transform the systems that function in ways

so as to enable such poverty. Only such hope that leads to transformation, both personal

and societal, is a responsible stewardship of God's grace. The goal of Christian

leadership, then, is not only to identify and promote the Church's living hope but to work

to ensure such hope leads to transformation.

Where no hope exists, no leadership can exists. Leaders have a responsibility for

keeping hope alive in times of difficulty (McKenna 135). Vision is a useful tool for

offering direction to a community of faith, but also by serving as a reminder to be hopeful

of the future. A vision says in dramatic ways what is possible for those who work

together toward the mission Christ has given to the Church (Weems 44). Hope is both a

powerful gift given to a leader and one the leader can, in turn, offer to the community. In times of crisis or transition, Christian leaders who offer hope can serve as anchors for the community (McKenna 135). Leaders who keep hope alive allow people to see beyond the horizon of what is now and offer glimpses of what can be and what will be. Such leadership provides the kind of hope that restores the community's focus back to the mission to which they have been called and reconnects them to the God of hope who has called them into being in the first place. A responsible steward of God's grace offers hope that leads to faithful action.

Biblical Characteristics of Christian Leadership

As God works to renew the community of faith, history has shown that he inevitably raises up men and women to serve as leaders from within the body of believers. As the gospel message began to spread from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, the early Church was formed by the countless congregations formed from town to town. Most often, people gathered in homes with other believers to pray, learn from the Scriptures, and share the Lord's Supper.

The ministry of the Apostle Paul offers indication that these home-based churches were loosely organized groups of new converts who continued to live as witnesses of Jesus Christ long after the apostle had moved on to another location. The books of the Bible known as the Epistles demonstrate the long-distance oversight that Paul offered to these congregations; however, Paul attempted to structure the Christian movement by leaving behind personally trained leaders to guide the growing congregations. For example, in Ephesus Paul left Timothy to lead the church. In Crete, he put Titus in charge.

In the books of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, commonly known as the Pastoral

Epistles, Paul not only offers encouragement to these leaders, but also gives guidelines

for the development of other leaders within the Church. Particularly in 1 Timothy 3 and

Titus 1:5-9, Paul indicates a detailed, although not inclusive, list of requirements for

Christian leadership:

> Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus. Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory. (1 Tim. 3:1-16, NIV)

Likewise, Paul's letter to the early Church leader known as Titus demonstrates similar

standards for pastoral oversight:

> The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be

blameless-not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. (Tit. 1:5-9, NIV)

In 1 Timothy 3:1-2, Paul uses the Greek word *episkope*, which translates as "bishop or overseer," to refer to the role of pastoral oversight of a congregation or congregations. In its original usage, at least until the time of Ignatius, the word *episkope* was restricted to those who exercised oversight in the local church (Guthrie 79).

In Titus 1:5, Paul refers to leadership by using the Greek word *presbyteroi*, which means elders. The characteristics for the *episkope* and for the *presbyteroi* are strikingly similar. *Presbyteros* and *episkopos* were regarded as near synonyms because the office of bishop had not yet become distinct from the office of elder (New Interpreter's Bible 864). Nevertheless, the current distinctions between the role of bishop and that of elder notwithstanding, the requirements for leadership are basically the same because a bishop is chosen from among the order of elders. In 1 Timothy 3:8-12, Paul gives instructions for the selection of deacons, whose role was to serve in a variety of areas of hands-on ministries. Table 2.4 outlines the requirements for overseers/elders and deacons.

Table 2.4. Biblical Requirements for Christian Leadership
_____

Requirements for an Overseer/Elder in 1 Timothy 3:2-7	Requirements for an Overseer/Elder in Titus 1:5-9	Requirements for a Deacon in 1 Timothy 3:8-12
3:2 Must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.	**1:6** Must be blamesless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children behave and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.	**3:8** Must be men of worthy respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain.
3:3 Not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.	**1:7** Not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.	**3:9** Must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.
3:4 Manage his own family well, see that his children obey him with proper respect.	**1:8** He must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined.	**3:11** Their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.
3:6 Not a recent convert.	**1:9** He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught.	**3:12** Must be the husband of but one wife and must maage his children and his household well.
3:7 Have a good reputation with outsiders.		

_____
Source: NIV.

The basic requirements listed as vices (what leaders should not do) and virtues (what leaders should do) in these passages are reflected in the secular idea of leadership characteristics of Paul's day. For example, the Greek leaders in Ephesus and Titus were expected to be hospitable, have good reputations in the community, not be violent, and so forth. The Christian leaders that Timothy and Titus were to develop were at least to meet the accepted characteristics of secular leadership, with one significant addition. The Christian leader should be unequivocally Christian. First Timothy 3:9 says that leaders "must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience" (NIV). Likewise,

Titus 1:9 states that a leader "must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it" (NIV).

First Timothy 3:16 contains an ancient hymn that outlines the basic understanding of certain events in the life of Christ that Paul uses to describe the mystery of the Christian faith: "He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory" (NIV). Undoubtedly, Paul includes these basic beliefs as a reminder of what Christian leaders must believe if they are to be considered faithful stewards of God. Confidence of faith was established as a crucial characteristic of Christian leadership from very early on in the life of the Church (New Interpreter's Bible 807). The Christian leader must cleave to the true message (Guthrie 186). In other words, Christian leaders must be faithful to the faith.

The examples of Timothy and Titus serve as reminders that the basic role of Christian leadership is to establish order and leadership development within the overriding context of teaching the Christian faith (Guthrie 184). The state of the Church is dependent upon the state of its leadership. In Titus 1:9, for example, Paul implies a medical metaphor, which describes a leader's teaching as either healthy or diseased (Davies 96).

Those who are called to lead within the Church as overseers/elders in particular, but also as deacons, must work to create and implement orderly systems within which other believers may grow in their service of God and others. Likewise, Christian leaders are in positions that enable the recruitment and development of other leaders from out of

the general Church. The Christian leader is called to be a steward of the household of God and to steward the vision of renewal that God has for the world, which is to be implemented through the life of the Church.

Leaders as Stewards of God's Vision

Jesus spent three years preparing his followers for his physical absence. He continually reminded them that he was establishing a kingdom, but that this kingdom would be ushered in through his death and resurrection. Christ's death and resurrection would serve to bring spiritual renewal, eternal life, and a reconciled relationship with God to the world. Such newness of life was God's vision for Jesus and his followers; hence, it was of utmost importance that Christ's followers be prepared to serve as faithful stewards of this vision once Jesus returned to his Father in heaven. Jesus was clear that the faithfulness of these stewards was of serious consequence:

> And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will punish him, and put him with the unfaithful. And that servant who knew his master's will, but did not make ready or act according to his will, shall receive a severe beating. But he who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, shall receive a light beating. Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more." (Luke 12:42-48, RSV)

Jesus' imagery, as graphic as it may be, serves to illustrate the serious nature of Christian leadership. God is looking for the "faithful and wise steward" to manage the kingdom vision that Jesus has initiated and will consummate at his return. A steward, *oikonomos* in the Greek language, during the New Testament era was often a servant who

was placed in charge of the master's estate during his absence. When the master returned, the steward was expected to report on how well the estate was managed. If managed well, the steward was blessed by given greater responsibility. If managed poorly, the steward was punished severely. The wise servant, therefore, would seek to be faithful.

The clear issue at hand in Jesus' parable is the faithfulness of the steward. The steward's faithfulness is described in relation to his service, not in terms of the power of his position (Bock 1178). Regardless of whether the servant was put in charge of a few things or many things, in the end the master looked for faithful stewardship. The image that Jesus conveyed in the parable was that of spiritual leaders who were given responsibility over God's community and how faithful they were in stewarding God's vision for the community. The only two classifications of leadership for which Jesus allowed are (1) faithful (*pistos*) and (2) unfaithful (*apistos*). The faithful steward is promoted because of his faithfulness, while the unfaithful steward is placed in the company of unbelievers because of his complete lack of faithfulness (1183).

The unfaithful stewards in the parable were identified for three distinct reasons. First, one steward was blatantly disobedient. This steward thought that the master's delayed return gave him reason to "beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink and get drunk" (vs. 45, RSV). The abusive and undisciplined nature of this steward's described behavior is clearly juxtaposed with the characteristics for leadership identified by Paul in 1 Timothy 3:2-3 and Titus 1:7 (see Table 2.4). Jesus said that this steward would be "cut to pieces" and judged as faithless.

Second, another steward's unfaithfulness was due, in part, to conscious disobedience (Bock 1180). In other words, this steward was aware of the master's

expectations but chose to ignore all or parts of them. Because of his unfaithfulness, this steward will not be punished as harshly as the first, but will instead "receive a severe beating" (vs. 47, RSV).

Third, the final steward was unfaithful out of apparent ignorance. For whatever reason, this steward was not aware of or did not understand what was expected of him. Therefore, his unfaithfulness will be punished with a "light beating" (vs. 48a, RSV).

The idea that Jesus communicated in this parable is that Christian leaders are to serve as God's stewards, managing the household of God and serving others until the master returns. Paul echoed this understanding when he wrote to Timothy, "If I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15, NIV).

God has a specific vision for the Church: to serve as a witness of Jesus Christ so that the world might come to know God through faith in him. Those who serve in leadership capacity in the Church are stewards of this vision and must serve with all faithfulness. Elsewhere in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul referred to himself and other leaders of the Church as "servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy" (1 Cor. 4:1-2, NRSV). Being stewards of God's vision is serious business, and the consequences of faithfulness, or the lack thereof, are immeasurable. Jesus reminded his hearers of this truth when he said, "Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more" (Luke 12:48, RSV).

The renewal of the Church as well as that of the world is linked to the faith or faithfulness of the stewards of God's vision.

Faith and Renewal

The people of God live by faith, and this faith contributes to God's work of renewal. The theme of faith in the Old Testament is associated with resting, trusting, and hoping in God, making God one's shield and tower, and taking refuge in him (Oetting 78). Likewise in the New Testament, faith is always rewarded by God. Above all else, the Church is called to live by faith in God and his word.

The Protestant Reformation, at its beginning, was defined by an emphasis on faith. *Sola fide* (faith alone) became the renewal movement's mantra as Martin Luther caught God's vision that the "righteous shall live by faith" (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17, NIV). John and Charles Wesley built upon this vision during the onset of the Methodist movement in the eighteenth century. Their vision for the Church was preached as a living faith. As Paul W. Chilcote notes, "Living faith as absolute trust in God through Christ, nurtured in fellowship, was the Methodist staff of life" (30). A key component of the renewal of the Church is such a living faith.

Faith must have an object, and the object of faith for the Church is Christ. Faith, although personally expressed by an individual, is not something in which a believer can boast. Faith has no other function but to allow people to receive what God's grace freely offers (Stott 78). A person is made righteous in God's sight by grace through faith. Furthermore, a renewed emphasis on faith or faithfulness is necessary for renewal to occur in the Church. Three principles for discovering a renewed vision for faith in Christ include responding to God's grace through faith, focusing on Christ's faithfulness, and a

balanced knowledge of law and grace. Responding to God's grace through faith locates

an individual within the larger reality of the community of faith, which offers a sense of

connectedness with others who possess a similar faith. Christ's faithfulness serves as the

basis for the Church's faith. The faithfulness of Jesus is the model the Church is called to

follow. Christ's faithfulness and the Church's faith in Christ give a balanced

understanding of law and grace (Chilcote 74-76). Ultimately, renewal is something God

does in response to the faithfulness of his people.

The gospel of grace allows the community of faith to have the freedom to live

faithfully. Faithfulness on behalf of God's people pleases God because faithfulness is

faith in action. Faith that does not lead people to action is not a living faith. Only a faith

that is alive joins with God's Spirit in the work of God's kingdom in the world. The

Apostle James makes the strongest case in the New Testament for faith in action: "Faith

without works is dead" (Jas. 2:26, NIV). In other words, faith is more than belief; it

involves action.

The faith that God desires for his people does not shrink from facing the painful

realities of life (Cymbala 43). On the contrary, a living faith drives God's people into the

midst of the world's problems, seeking not just to help but to heal, not just to understand

but to transcend, not just to cope but to transform, and not just to listen but to tell of the

wonders of God. Those who value faith seek every opportunity to see and experience

God (Anderson 98). Faith and faithfulness are interrelated realities.

Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as being sure of what is hoped for and certain of what

is not seen. Faith, then, functions in respect to two special objects: future things, or what

is hoped for, and invisible things, or what is not seen (Cymbala 199). Faith requires

God's people to move into the future without exactly knowing what lies ahead. Faith, in the broadest sense, implies trust outrunning sight. Faith, then, is content to step out not knowing where it is going so long as it knows who is going along (154). The Christian life, as revealed in 2 Corinthians 5:7, is about living by faith not by sight; thus, a church that follows God's vision for tomorrow begins the journey today. Like Abraham, for a community of faith to live faithfully means going to the place of future inheritance, even though they do not know exactly where they are going. Following God's vision into a renewed tomorrow cannot be done without faith.

Renewal is connected to faith in God and faithfulness toward God, both personally and corporately. As people respond to God through faith, the first thing that happens is that they are renewed or changed. This fact is evident in the life and ministry of Jesus. In the Gospel of Mark, the first recorded words spoken by Jesus in his public ministry are "Repent for the kingdom of God is near" (Mark 1:15, NIV). The Greek word for repent is *metanoia*, which means "to change." Jesus' message calls those who hear to change or, rather, to allow themselves to be changed in order to participate in the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is the "already" and "not yet" aspect of God's activity in the world and can be thought of as the system by which God has chosen to implement his purposes and to which he has called people to live. Thinking of God's kingdom as the system of God offers a new perspective on what God seeks to accomplish in the world and how human beings can affect how God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven. God's desire is for the Church to live in the "already" realities of the kingdom while moving ever closer to the "not yet" hope of the fulfilled kingdom. The difficulty the

Church has faced throughout its history is that God's people have often regressed from the "already" and lived in what may be referred to simply as the "not." In other words, God's people do not always live in such a way that enables them to function in God's system or kingdom. In so doing, they regress from the kingdom's "already" presence to areas of life where the kingdom is "not" present. When God's people live in a "not" relationship with God's kingdom, change must occur in order for them to move back to the "already" and progress toward the "not yet." Such a transformation can only occur when people respond to God's grace through faith.

Jesus' call for personal transformation (*metanoia*) reflects the challenge to participate in the kingdom system by doing the right thing on earth (Herrington, Creech, and Taylor 46). People who respond to Jesus' call to personal change affect the functioning of the system of God on earth for the better. Personal transformation, or a faithful response to God's vision for the Church, enables God's people to participate better in the "already" aspects of God's kingdom and to move closer to the "not yet" realities that lie ahead. When God's people engage in personal transformation, faithfulness is fostered and renewal can take place.

Renewal or change is God's idea. God's plan is to renew people, to change or transform them into new creatures by restoring his image in them. Clearly, this understanding is reflected in the theology of the Apostle Paul who wrote, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind," and "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 5:17, NIV). Indeed, God's plan is also to renew the whole of creation as reflected in John's Revelation: "I am making everything new" (21:5,

NIV). Erwin Raphael McManus writes, "You can never properly understand biblical theology without accepting that change is one of the most significant dynamics that God instigates in the church" (80). Essentially, the Bible is a document about change.

A faithful response to God's desire for renewal serves as a catalyst for renewal. Faithfulness is lived out, both individually and corporately, through a variety of experiences. Stephen Seamands suggest four keys to renewal: restlessness, refining, risk-taking, and reorientation (19). Renewal begins when the people of God respond to God out of a sense of discontent with the status quo. This restlessness leads to a faithful quest for more of God. Often a period of difficulty serves as a time of refining. God often allows his people to experience periods of pain in order to purify and renew their faith. Faithfully following God involves taking risks. Renewal happens when God's people risk leaving comfort zones and relinquish control to God. Renewal also means being reoriented. It means refocusing on the core values of Jesus rather than on the values of the world that once seemed important. Renewal involves actively pursuing the things that God is pursuing. Often, the pursuit of God's kingdom turns out to be a larger endeavor than ever dreamed.

God is always working for renewal, both in the Church and in the world; however, renewal involves change. Change is not normally a high priority of human beings. A fundamental necessity of being a Christian has been leaving behind those systems and structures that offer security and predictable order to follow God's vision for the preferred future. As the Church, through faith, seeks the unchanging God of change, renewal is the blessed result.

Renewal is a constant task of the community of faith (Chilcote 25). The Church is meant to be involved in the continual process of renewing and being renewed. Throughout Church history, movements of renewal have been linked to the faithful actions of people who responded to a vision from God. Certainly, Wesley is a prime example of one whose faithfulness to God helped to initiate renewal. Methodism began as an attempt to renew the Church of England and, in turn, became a catalyst for an entirely new movement of God's Spirit in England, then America, and around the world. Wesley's methodical structure of renewal for the Church can serve the Church still today. Steve Harper suggests five of Wesley's principles for spiritual renewal (131-39). First, all people are urged to experience a personal faith in Christ. Spiritual renewal requires a faith that personally connects to the heart and soul of individuals. Second, Christians are encouraged to pursue greater degrees of discipline with the goal of holiness. The classic spiritual disciplines such as the study of Scripture, prayer, fasting, giving, service, and Christian conferencing often open spiritual avenues for renewal to take place. Third, renewal tends to occur when people are grouped together relationally in small groups. The impact of Wesley's class meetings, and of the current growth of small groups, indicates that God brings about spiritual renewal when Christians developing intimate relationships with other believers. A fourth principle of spiritual renewal involves a renewed appreciation for the sacraments and other means of grace. The means of grace, which provide opportunities to experience God's presence in significant ways, are activities that allow people to participate in moments of sacredness. Fifth, in spiritual renewal, a strong emphasis is evident for Christ to be offered to everyone. An emphasis on evangelism often fuels a time of renewal in a church (131-39). The theological heart

of Methodism, with its undeniable emphasis on faith and renewal, is inextricably linked to the movement of God who empowers all who faithfully seek the newness that only God can bring.

Faith and renewal begin with God and are initiated by God. When Christian leaders take hold of God's vision for the community of faith, renewal is made possible. Faithful obedience to the movement of God's Spirit will ultimately lead to renewal for the Church and, most importantly, renewal for the world into which the Church has been sent by Christ to go and make disciples. As history has shown, whenever the Church faithfully partners with God in the work of the kingdom, which operates by God's vision of seeking and saving the lost, renewal takes place. As such a reality of living out God's vision has proven to be true for faithful Christians of the past, so may it also be for the Church of today.

Prior Research

Former Beeson Pastors Jim Kinder, Brian Law, Scott McKee, and Keith Taylor developed and implemented the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire for their dissertation projects at Asbury Seminary. These researchers sought to establish a relationship between church health and church growth in their respective denominations: Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), Western Canadian District of the Christian Missionary Alliance (WCDCMA), West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church (WOCUMC), and the General Association of Baptist Churches (GAGBC). Table 2.5 lists the findings of their research.

Table 2.5. Church Health Characteristics Comparison Between EPC, WCDCMA, WOCUMC, and the GAGBC

Beeson Health Characteristic	EPC (N=15)		WCDCMA (N=28)		WOCUMC (N=45)		GAGBC (N=9)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Engaging worship	1.88	.66	1.94	.67	1.86	.58	1.86	.58
Passionate spirituality	1.95	.60	2.07	.58	2.01	.54	1.96	.53
Intentional evangelism	2.00	.50	2.04	.49	2.11	.48	2.09	.45
Mobilized laity	2.01	.58	2.14	.59	2.17	.56	2.26	.51
Functional structures	2.08	.68	2.01	.55	2.17	.56	2.29	.59
Empowering leadership	2.18	.63	2.19	.54	2.29	.54	2.44	.57
Transforming leadership	2.21	.49	2.33	.47	2.36	.50	2.33	.46
Authentic community	2.29	.48	2.39	.40	2.34	.40	2.34	.42

Source: McKee 76.

Methodology

This study constitutes a descriptive case study that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, addresses a situation in which the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and collects multiple sources of evidence in search of possible relationships and effects (Yin 59). The study collected data using both quantitative and qualitative research. The use of the BCHQ, which describes phenomenon in numbers and measures, constitutes quantitative research, whereas the focus group interviews, which describe phenomenon in words, represent qualitative research (Wiersma 11). This multi-method approach sought to attribute causal relationships and not simply explore or describe the situation (Yin 31; Morgan, Focus Groups 3).

The research was conducted in a systematic process. The first step was to determine what the study was attempting to measure. In this case the independent variable measured was church health.

Step two was to gather information concerning the problem and discern how others have dealt with similar problems. In this study the literature review examined the nature of systems and change, as well as the role of visionary leadership. The use of the BCHQ in this study builds upon prior research on the topic of the relationship between church health and church growth.

The third step was to choose a method of collecting the data (Wiersma 3). The BCHQ was used to gather hard data from local churches. The use of focus groups was used to corroborate data collected from the BCHQ survey research (Morgan, <u>Successful Focus Groups</u> 121).

The fourth step involved analyzing and interpreting the data. Once the BCHQ data had been collected and analyzed, the focus groups served to follow up and explore various aspects of the analysis (Morgan, <u>Focus Groups</u> 27).

Step five involved making generalizations and drawing conclusions after the data had been analyzed (Wiersma 3). The BCHQ data and the focus group data were compared to determine how changes in church health correlate to the perceived impact of the vision by conference leadership.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

In any organization experiencing transition, the impact of a wide spread corporate vision, along with the change that accompanies such vision, are important issues to measure. Considering the God-given mission of the Church to make disciples of Jesus Christ, compounded by the slow nature of the Church to respond to change, regular attempts to quantify the impact of any effort to cast a vision for change becomes imperative.

This study sought to measure the impact the West Ohio Conference's vision of the Core Process for Making Disciples has had on local churches and built upon previous research of the West Ohio Conference completed by Dr. Law. The research for Law's dissertation was completed in 2001, during the initial stages of conference-wide vision. The results of Law's study, which I will refer to as BCH 2001, will serve as the baseline for the findings of this study.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of the conference's vision of the Core Process for Making Disciples by describing the relationship between church health and church growth in United Methodist churches in the West Ohio Conference. In addition, this study also assessed the perceptions of local church and conference leadership regarding the impact of the vision and the necessary changes in the system that are yet to be made.

Research Questions

Three primary research questions guided this study.

Research Question #1

What is the change in Beeson Church Health characteristics from 2001 to 2004 in congregations of the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church (WOC)?

The Beeson Church Health Questionnaire was used to measure the eight quality health characteristics in West Ohio congregations. These quality characteristics are (1) authentic community, (2) empowering leadership, (3) engaging worship, (4) functional structures, (5) intentional evangelism, (6) mobilized laity, (7) passionate spirituality, and (8) transforming discipleship.

This study presupposes that healthy churches are growing churches. If the vision of the Core Process for Making Disciples is having a positive impact on local congregations, the quality characteristics of the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire should correlate with the four aspects of the core process and demonstrate an increase in church health as compared to the results of BCH 2001. The vision's impact was wlso assessed by measuring the annual rate of change in the average number of persons attending the principal weekend worship services in West Ohio congregations. This average annual attendance is calculated for the time period of 1999-2003 and was compared to the results of the BCHQ implemented in this study, which are referred to as BCH 2004.

Research Question #2

What has been the perceived impact of the vision of the Core Process of Making Disciples?

A researcher-designed questionnaire was used to conduct a series of focus group interviews with clergy, lay members to annual conference, and members from the West

Ohio cabinet to assess local church and conference leadership's perceptions of the impact of the Core Process as well as the systemic change needed to realign conference structures and resources for the fulfillment of the vision. Over 50 percent of cabinet members have been in such an appointment since 2001 when the conference vision began to unfold. Focus group interviews were conducted to determine what key changes were perceived by these leaders as instrumental to the vision's impact. In addition to the series of focus group interviews, a personal interview was conducted with Bishop Bruce R. Ough of the West Ohio Conference.

Research Question #3

How do the changes in church health correlate to the perceived impact of the vision by conference leadership?

.   Both the BCH 2001 and BCH 2004 findings served as bookends for the 2001-2004 quadrennium. In particular, the quantitative data of the BCH 2004 will be compared to the qualitative data of the interviews to determine if the changes in church health correlate with the perceived impact of the vision on the conference as a whole. If the Core Process vision is impacting the health of local congregations, then it is predicted that a positive correlation exists between church health and the perceptions of local church and conference leadership regarding the vision.

Population and Sample

The population for this study included clergy and lay members of local congregations, members of the West Ohio cabinet, and the resident bishop of the West Ohio Conference.

Survey of West Ohio Churches

The population of this survey included churches in the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church. Specifically the churches were selected from a criterion-based sample. The criterion for the sample was established by using the identical forty-five congregations from Law's study. The churches varied in size and location, providing a cross-section of members from the West Ohio Conference.

Focus Groups: Local Church and Conference Leaders

The population of the focus group interview of local church leaders was selected from a sample of ten churches from five geographical regions of the conference. Two churches from each of the five regions were randomly selected and invited to participate in the interview experience.

Focus group interviews of the West Ohio cabinet were implemented as a multi-method approach to add to and clarify the data gathered through the BCHQ. To assess conference leadership's perceptions of systemic change needed to realign conference structures and resources for the fulfillment of the vision, two focus groups, comprised of a total of ten to fourteen members of the West Ohio cabinet, were interviewed. Each group consisted of five to seven members. The West Ohio cabinet is made up of fourteen district superintendents. Because this group of leaders varied in their length of service as cabinet members, efforts were taken to ensure that each focus group was comprised of veteran members as well as those new to the cabinet.

Interview with the Bishop

A personal interview was conducted with the resident bishop of the West Ohio Conference. The interview was the final phase of the research, which provided insight of

the overall impact of the conference vision from the perspective of the leader of the conference. The interview also allowed for analysis of findings from the series of focus group interviews.

Instrumentation

The research project was an evaluative study in the descriptive mode that implemented both the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire and a researcher-designed questionnaire. The congregational component of the BCHQ was self-administered by a criterion-based sample of local churches with fifty-five items measuring church health (see Appendix B). The pastoral questionnaire of the BCHQ was self-administered by the pastors of the sample of local churches (see Appendix C). The researcher-designed questionnaire, called the Leadership Questionnaire, was implemented through focus group interviews with local church and conference leadership (see Appendixes E, F, and G).

Beeson Church Health Characteristics

The Beeson Church Health Questionnaire measures eight critical categories of church health. These categories are community, leadership, worship, structures, evangelism, laity involvement, spirituality, and discipleship. The categories are further defined as characteristics of health in a local congregation. The following is the list of church health characteristics: (1) authentic community, (2) empowering leadership, (3) engaging worship, (4) functional structures, (5) intentional evangelism, (6) mobilized laity, (7) passionate spirituality, and (8) transforming discipleship.

Congregational Questionnaire

The Beeson Church Health Questionnaire consists of fifty-four questions, with a

minimum of nine and a maximum of twelve questions applicable to each health

characteristic. This instrument uses a five-point Likert scale to measure congregational

attitudes toward the eight health characteristics. The questionnaire is four pages in length

and also includes demographic and contextual questions (see Appendix B).

Congregational Contextual Factors Questionnaire

The BCHQ also includes a questionnaire to determine congregational contextual

factors. This component, which is completed by the church's pastor, is used to collect

statistics on church growth, baptisms, conversions,[1] and specific contextual factors. The

instrument includes six items dealing with such issues as length of tenure of the senior

pastor, age of the facility, population size, average weekend worship attendance, and

baptisms and conversions per year (see Appendix C).

Leadership Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in the focus group interviews was designed to interpret the

quantitative BCHQ data further and gain insight to the perceptions of local church and

conference leadership regarding the vision and the change initiative. The focus group and

personal interviews were guided by three overarching issues: leadership and vision, hope

and health, health and growth. The questions provided a guiding structure to the

interviews, with each general question followed up by more detailed, probing questions

(see Appendixes E, F, and G). A detailed protocol was developed for this study and used

for each of the focus group and personal interviews (see Appendix D).

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Data Collection

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This study measured the current state of church health for the West Ohio

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[1] The understanding of baptism and conversion were interpreted through the polity of the United Methodist Church.

Conference of the United Methodist Church by using quality characteristics as defined by the BCHQ as it relates to the Core Process for Making Disciples.

Based on the number of districts in the West Ohio Conference, a criterion-based sample of churches was established by using the population studies in Law's 2001 study. The BCHQ was distributed to the participating churches from Law's research.

On several occasions between January and June 2003, I communicated the basis of this study to Bishop Ough and other members of the West Ohio cabinet. In March 2004, I approached the West Ohio bishop to explain the nature of the study and ask him to endorse the survey of local churches by writing a cover letter to encourage the involvement of churches in this study, which I subsequently received.

Along with the bishop's cover letter, I mailed a letter to current pastors of the forty-five churches from Law's study inviting them to participate in this study and offered detailed explanation of the project and the benefits of involvement. I included a self-addressed, stamped postcard for churches to return to me indicating whether or not they would participate in the study. I confirmed the responses of those who agreed to participate and made a phone call or sent an e-mail to follow up with those who did not respond. The questionnaires were mailed to participating churches in April 2004, including detailed instructions for each pastor. A self-addressed, stamped envelope was provided to return the questionnaires. A four-week window was allotted for their completion and return. The data was collected during the second quarter (March through June) of 2004.

The focus group interview with local church leadership of clergy and lay members of annual conference was conducted in June 2004. I identified five geographical

regions of the conference (central Ohio, southern Ohio, southwest Ohio, northwest Ohio, and western Ohio). Next, I wrote the letters of the alphabet on separate pieces of paper and asked my seven year old daughter to select five letters randomly. One letter was assigned to each of the five regions, and churches whose name started with the designated letter were then written on separate pieces of paper. My five year old son randomly selected two churches from each of the five regions.

I mailed a letter of invitation to each of the ten churches asking them to participate in a focus group interview at my cottage at Lakeside, Ohio, during the 2004 West Ohio Annual Conference session. Phone calls were made to the churches that did not respond. Three churches agreed to participate with two ultimately following through with their commitment. The interview was conducted over lunch on 7 June 2004 with two clergy and five laypeople participating.

The focus group interviews with members of the West Ohio cabinet were conducted on 7 and 8 July 2004. Both interviews were scheduled through the bishop's office and were conducted over the lunch break during regular cabinet sessions. The interviews were conducted in the cabinet conference room at the West Ohio Conference Center in Worthington, Ohio. Eleven of the fourteen district superintendents participated in the two interviews.

The personal interview with Bishop Ough was scheduled through the bishop's office and was conducted on 14 September 2004 in his office at the West Ohio Conference Center in Worthington, Ohio.

The results of the BCHQ helped to evaluate the overall health of churches in the West Ohio Conference, whereas the focus group and personal interviews fostered a

deeper understanding of local church and conference leadership's perception of the vision's impact. The data gathered from the BCHQ was then compared to the data collected in the focus group interviews.

Data Analysis

After receiving the questionnaires from the participating churches, computer tabulation of the data was completed at Summit Station United Methodist Church. The data was then analyzed in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, with the help of Dr. Barbara Boone and Dr. Jerry Bean. The data from the surveys was summarized with frequency distribution, descriptive statistics, and the use of Pearson's product moment correlation. During the analysis of the data it was necessary to reverse the values of the five-point Likert scale because the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire had been revised since being implemented in Law's study.

The data from the focus group and personal interviews was transcribed by Linda Crawford, the secretary at Summit Station United Methodist Church. Transcripts were then analyzed and emerging themes were identified.

Variables

One variable of this study is church health. This variable is operationalized by the Beeson Church Health Characteristics: authentic community, empowering leadership, engaging worship, functional structures, intentional evangelism, mobilized laity, passionate spirituality, and transforming discipleship.

A second variable is church growth, which is operationalized as the rate of growth in attendance in the principle weekend worship service(s), baptisms, membership, and conversions over a five-year time period of 1999-2003.

A third variable instrumental in interpreting the data collected from the BCHQ was the vision. This variable was operationalized by measuring perceptions of change by local church and conference leadership via the interviews with local church and conference leadership using an open-ended questionnaire.

Intervening variables that might affect the outcome of the study include spiritual disciplines, personal demographics, and church demographics. Spiritual disciplines include personal devotions, family devotions, involvement in ministry, prayer, sharing of faith, Bible study, and other disciplines. Personal demographics include church membership, number of years involved in the local church, frequency of worship attendance, percentage of money given to the church, participation in a small group setting, involvement in ministry, perception of community (i.e., growing, plateaued, declining), age, gender, marital status, and number of children. Church demographics were tenure of pastoral leadership, adequacy of staffing, age of facility, adequacy of facility size, growth patterns of the community, and the population of the community.

Generalizability

This study was delimited to include only churches of the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church. The purpose of this study was to measure the impact of West Ohio's vision of the Core Process of Making Disciples on local churches. Findings may be applicable to other annual conferences in the United Methodist Church. Results of the study are summarized in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Any type of vision initiative, whether in business, academia, or the church, needs to be measured. Regular data collection and the evaluation of performance indicators are essential to the development of an organization's vision. If a vision cannot be measured, it cannot be managed. With regard to the effects of leadership and vision in the church, some aspects, such as hope, are difficult to measure directly. Hope is one response to a vision for the future. When people sense and embrace a God-given vision for the future of a church, hope can begin to emerge in them. This hope, one which is specifically rooted in the eschatological hope of Christ's return, enables a congregation to move forward into the immediate future with enthusiasm and faith.

The purpose of this study was to determine what impact the West Ohio Conference vision of the core process for making disciples has had on local churches. Three research questions have guided this study: What is the change in Beeson Church Health characteristics from 2001 to 2004 in congregations of the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church (WOC)? What has been the perceived impact of the vision of the Core Process of Making Disciples? How do the changes in church health correlate to the perceived impact of the vision by conference leadership?

Profile of Subjects

This study was a mixed methodology of quantitative survey data and qualitative interviews and focus groups. Phase one was a survey that provided quantitative data, while phases two and three consisted of a series of interviews that provided qualitative data. Phase two was comprised of a series of three focus group interviews with clergy and

lay members of the West Ohio conference, and phase three was an individual interview with the resident bishop of West Ohio. All data was collected from March to September 2004.

Phase one of the study involved administering the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire in churches of the West Ohio Conference. Forty-five churches that participated in a previous study conducted by Law in 2001 were invited to take part in this study. Along with a letter of endorsement from Bishop Ough, letters of invitation were mailed to the pastors of the forty-five churches that participated in Law's 2001 study. The Beeson Church Health Questionnaire was mailed to the pastors of the churches that agreed to participate with the intention of distributing them to local church participants. The total population of this phase of the study was twenty-one local churches, or 46.7 percent of the total congregations in Law's study. The total number of surveys completed was 215. One hundred and ninety of the respondents were members of their respective churches and had been involved in their local church an average of twenty years. Of those who responded to the survey, 64 percent were female, 35 percent were male, and 1 percent did not respond to the question on gender. The age of respondents ranged from 15 to 85, with an average age of 53. Detailed results of the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire come later in this chapter.

The communities in which the twenty-one churches are located vary in population, from small rural areas to large urban centers. Eleven churches exist in an area with a population of less than fifty thousand people within twenty minutes of the church. Three of these eleven churches are in communities of less than five thousand. Ten churches are located in an area with a population of over fifty thousand, including three

near cities with over 300,000 people.

Each of the pastors of the churches in phase one of this study responded to an

additional survey that provided statistical and demographic information regarding the

contextual factors of their ministry situations. The lengths of appointments varied

dramatically. Fifteen of the pastors had been serving in their current appointments six

years or less, whereas six had been with their respective church for seven or more years.

Four of the fifteen pastors with no more than six years of tenure had been in their

appointments less than two years. Conversely, only two pastors in the study had been

serving the same appointment for more than ten years.

In addition to the population of the local community and the length of time

serving their respective churches, the pastors were asked to provide statistical information

regarding the number of members, baptisms, and the average worship attendance over a

five-year period (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Statistical Information of Participating West Ohio Churches (N=21)

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Five-Year % of Change
Total Number of Members	7,731	8,118	8,123	8,103	7,963	3.00
Total Number of Baptisms	206	272	305	234	242	17.47
Total Number of Conversions	189	176	262	150	177	- 6.34
Average Worship Attendance	3,970	4,176	4,543	4,626	4,565	14.98

Law's study examined the five-year rate of change for the forty-five West Ohio

congregations for the years 1995 to 1999. His findings suggested a positive rate of

change in baptisms, conversions, and average worship attendance but a negative rate of change in membership (85).

Phase two of the study was comprised of a series of focus interviews with pastors and lay members to annual conference as well as members of the West Ohio cabinet. For the interview with pastors and lay members to annual conference, a sample of ten churches was selected by randomly selecting two churches from five different geographical regions of the West Ohio Conference. These five regions incorporated all fourteen districts of the conference and covered the following geographical areas: central Ohio, southern Ohio, southwest Ohio, northwest Ohio, and western Ohio.

The ten churches were identified by allowing my seven year old daughter to assign a letter of the alphabet randomly to each of the five geographical regions. Next, churches in each of the five regions that had names starting with that letter were identified, and two were randomly selected by my daughter to represent their respective regions. Letters were mailed to the ten pastors of the sample of churches inviting them and the lay members to annual conference from their church to my cottage at Lakeside, Ohio, during the 2004 West Ohio Annual Conference. Three of the ten churches agreed to participate in the interview, and two followed through with their commitment. The two churches represented two different geographical regions.

On Monday, 7 June 2004, members of the two churches met at my cottage for lunch to participate in the focus group interview. These churches were represented by a total of two pastors and five lay members to annual conference. The interview was guided by three specific sets of issues: vision and leadership, hope and health, and health and growth. The initial questions for the guiding issues were as follows:

1. Vision and leadership-"During the last two or three years, how has your pastor encouraged your congregation to accomplish the conference vision?"

2. Hope and health-"How has the mood or overall feeling in your church changed in the last three years?"

3. Health and growth-"What are the signs of growth (numerical, spiritual, economical, physical) that you observe in your congregation?"

The interview, which lasted ninety minutes, was tape-recorded with the permission of the participants. All seven subjects contributed to the discussion. The significant findings of the interview are reported later in this chapter.

The additional component of phase two consisted of two focus group interviews with members of the West Ohio cabinet. The cabinet, led by the bishop, is made up of the fourteen district superintendents.

On 7 and 8 July 2004, two focus group interviews were conducted at the West Ohio Conference Center in Worthington, Ohio, with available district superintendents. A total of eleven district superintendents, or 84.6 percent of the thirteen eligible cabinet members, participated in this phase of the study. One district superintendent was eliminated since he served as the dissertation mentor. Typically, a district superintendent serves on the West Ohio cabinet for six years. The average length of service as a district superintendent was 2.7 years for participants in this study. This average was representative of the average length of service for all fourteen district superintendents. Two of the participants had served on the cabinet for five years, and one was a new district superintendent. Nine of the fourteen district superintendents have been appointed by the current bishop of the West Ohio Conference. Table 4.2 provides an overview of

the length of time each district superintendent has served on the West Ohio cabinet.

Table 4.2. Number of Years Served as District Superintendent in West Ohio

	0-2 Years	3-4 Years	5-6 Years
	7	5	2

Source: West Ohio Journal 2004 44-175.

The focus group interviews with the cabinet were guided by the same issues as the interview with pastors and lay members to annual conference as described earlier in phase two. The following questions were used to focus the discussion on these guiding issues.

1. Vision and leadership-"How do you adjust your own vision, your own sense of what needs to happen in your particular district, with that of the bishop's vision for the conference?"

2. Hope and health-"What are some examples of the congregations in your district which have gone from this stereotype to one of hope and vitality?"

3. Health and hope-"Since church health can be a relative term, how does this aspect of the vision get defined, clarified, shaped, and implemented via the cabinet and other key leaders?"

The interviews, which each lasted sixty minutes, were tape-recorded with the permission of the participants. All eleven subjects contributed to the discussion, some more than others. The significant findings of the interview are reported later in this

chapter.

Phase three of the study consisted of an interview with the resident bishop of the West Ohio Conference, Bruce R. Ough. In the United Methodist Church, bishops are elected for life and usually serve an annual conference for at least four years. Bishop Ough was elected to the episcopacy in July 2000 and has been serving in West Ohio since September of that year. Prior to his election to the episcopacy, Bishop Ough had been a district superintendent in Iowa and served in appointments throughout the midwest. He has a background in organizational leadership and was actually serving a large local church at the time he was elected bishop.

On 14 September 2004, a personal interview was conducted with Bishop Ough in his office at the West Ohio Conference Center in Worthington, Ohio. The interview was guided by the same issues as the focus group interviews with pastors and lay members to annual conference and the cabinet. The following questions were used to focus the discussion on these guiding issues.

1. Vision and leadership-"What steps are you currently taking or plan to take in the future to ensure that ownership of the vision transcends you and the members of the cabinet?

2. Hope and health-"What do you believe to be the unrealized potential of the West Ohio Conference?"

3. Health and hope-"What are the systems and structures that the people of the WOC value and how can these values foster growth in local congregations?"

The interview lasted sixty minutes and was tape-recorded with the permission of the participant. Significant insights are shared later in this chapter.

Phase One: The Beeson Church Health Questionnaire

The Beeson Church Health Questionnaire, implemented in phase one of the study, examined eight essential measures of church health in each local church. These measures were authentic community, empowering leadership, engaging worship, functional structures, intentional evangelism, mobilized laity, passionate spirituality, and transforming discipleship.

The four aspects of the conference vision of the Core Process for Making Disciples (radical hospitality, passionate worship, faith-forming relationships and experiences, and risk-taking service) could be compared to the eight church health characteristics in the following way:

Radical hospitality is comparable to the church health characteristics of intentional evangelism and authentic community;

Passionate worship is comparable to the church health characteristics of engaging worship and passionate spirituality;

Faith-forming relationships and experiences is comparable to the church health characteristics of transforming discipleship and functional structures; and,

Risk-taking service is comparable to the church health characteristics of mobilized laity and empowering leadership.

Overall, respondents to this questionnaire perceived engaging worship, authentic community, and passionate spirituality as the strongest of the health characteristics. Comparing these characteristics to aspects of the conference vision suggests that issues of hospitality and worship are perceived to be stronger in the surveyed churches. Such a finding makes sense as churches tend to perceive themselves as friendly and welcoming

and see the worship service as the center of congregational life.

Conversely, subjects rated transforming discipleship and empowering leadership as the weakest of the health characteristics. Such a finding may suggest that participants perceive the aspects of faith-forming relationships and experiences as well as risk-taking service to be weaker. While people perceive their church as being friendly and place high value on the worship service, many do not feel empowered by church leaders nor do they sense their lives being transformed. The difference between the means of the strongest church health characteristic (engaging worship) and the weakest characteristic (empowering leadership) was .87 on scale of 1 to 5 (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3. 2004 Church Health Characteristics for Churches in the West Ohio Conference

Beeson Church Health Characteristics	2004 Study (N=215)	
	M	**SD**
Authentic community	1.82	.60
Empowering leadership	2.57	.42
Engaging worship	1.71	.71
Functional structures	2.26	.57
Intentional evangelism	2.23	.34
Mobilized laity	2.14	.44
Passionate spirituality	1.84	.64
Transforming discipleship	2.45	.40

Because this phase of the study replicates prior research conducted by Law, a comparison was made between Law's 2001 findings and the results of this study. In both studies, engaging worship was rated as the strongest health characteristic. Passionate

spirituality was also ranked as one of the strongest in both studies, second in Law's and

third in this study. The health characteristic of authentic community, however, was

perceived differently in the two studies. In Law's study, authentic community was rated

as the seventh weakest characteristic, whereas it was rated the second strongest in this

study. Furthermore, empowering leadership, which was the sixth weakest health

characteristic in Law's study, was perceived as the weakest of all eight characteristic in

this study (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4. 2001 Church Health Data Compared to 2004 Church Health Data[2]

Beeson Church Health Characteristics	2001 (N=45)		2004 (N=215)			
	M	**SD**	**M**	**SD**	**t**	**p**
Authentic community	2.34	.40	1.82	.60	-12.34	.000 *
Empowering leadership	2.29	.54	2.57	.42	9.82	.000 *
Engaging worship	1.86	.58	1.71	.71	- 0.31	.002 *
Functional structures	2.17	.56	2.26	.57	2.21	.029 *
Intentional evangelism	2.11	.48	2.23	.34	5.03	.000 *
Mobilized laity	2.17	.56	2.14	.44	- 0.85	.398
Passionate spirituality	2.01	.54	1.84	.64	- 3.75	.000 *
Transforming discipleship	2.36	.50	2.45	.40	3.23	.001 *

2-tailed test

Participants indicated a positive change in three church health characteristics from

2004 to 2001 (authentic community, engaging worship, and passionate spirituality).

Participants indicated a negative change in four church health characteristics from 2004

to 2001 (empowering leadership, functional structures, intentional evangelism, and

[2] This study surveyed 215 people from twenty-one churches. The data was analyzed individually and not grouped by church. Law reported his data analysis by church and not individually.

transforming discipleship).The church health characteristic of mobilized laity showed no statistically significant change between 2001 and 2004.

Correlations were made between the eight church health characteristics and the variables of gender and membership status. These measurements can be found in Tables 4.5 and 4.6.

Table 4.5. Difference between Men and Women in Perception of Church Health Characteristics

Beeson Church Health Characteristics	Male (N=74) M	SD	Female (N=134) M	SD	t
Authentic community	1.90	.68	1.78	.56	.184
Empowering leadership	2.62	.38	2.55	.44	.261
Engaging worship	1.75	.68	1.68	.74	.509
Functional structures	2.30	.58	2.23	.56	.392
Intentional evangelism	2.24	.36	2.23	.34	.829
Mobilized laity	2.17	.48	2.13	.42	.582
Passionate spirituality	1.89	.61	1.82	.65	.468
Transforming discipleship	2.54	.39	2.34	.39	.011 *

2-tailed test

Men and women perceived church health differently. Women who participated in the study tended to perceive the church as healthier than men did in every category, with transforming discipleship being statistically significant.

Table 4.6. Difference between Church Membership Status in Perception of Church Health Characteristics

Beeson Church Health Characteristics	Yes (N=186)		No (N=22)		t
	M	**SD**	**M**	**SD**	
Authentic community	1.82	.62	1.83	.47	.937
Empowering leadership	2.57	.42	2.62	.37	.604
Engaging worship	1.72	.73	1.62	.53	.554
Functional structures	2.26	.58	2.23	.49	.838
Intentional evangelism	2.25	.35	2.07	.27	.022
Mobilized laity	2.14	.43	2.16	.54	.864
Passionate spirituality	1.86	.66	1.73	.43	.388
Transforming discipleship	2.43	.40	2.59	.36	.074

2-tailed test

Non-church members perceived intentional evangelism more positively than church members. Church members perceived transforming discipleship to be stronger than those who were not members.

Phase Two: Focus Group Interviews

Phase two of the study involved conducting a series of focus group interviews with pastors and lay members to annual conference as well as members of the West Ohio cabinet. Two pastors and five lay members participated in the first interview. One group represented a large, county-seat church in northwest Ohio. The other group represented a small but growing church located in a suburb of a major city. Several themes emerged from this interview in relation to the impact of the conference vision at the local church level: resource alignment, a feeling of being affirmed, the importance of pastoral leadership, and signs of hope.

First, evidence of the positive effect of resource alignment in relation to the vision was discovered. When asked, "During the last two or three years, how has your pastor encouraged your congregation to accomplish the conference vision," one response was, "I think it has been a determining factor to place in leadership the people who have interest and encourage people to be in their strengths." When asked if this church structured its ministries around the four parts of the core process, members of one church spoke of restructuring its administrative council based on the self-imposed question of "What is it that we're trying to do?" This moment of focusing on the vision of the church became a turning point for the congregation to realign its resources to accomplish the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ better.

Further evidence of the impact of resource alignment was shown when the smaller church was asked to describe some of the things that had contributed to their recent growth. One individual responded by referring to the pastor saying, "He came in with so many new and fresh ideas but his tact in implementing it was perfect." This pastoral appointment had been made a few years prior to the interview as a strategic appointment to a struggling church in a rapidly growing area.

Second, a sense of affirmation was expressed by the participants in regard to the impact of the conference vision on the local church. One person spoke of people in the congregation returning from conference and district events saying, "We're already doing that. We're already doing that. We're already doing that. We're already there." She then said, "Which is just to say that they receive affirmation from those places." One participant indicated growth in the process of affirmation saying, "Even though the basic stuff [the local church's ministry] is not being born out of the conference vision. It's

being affirmed and then subtly nurtured and grown. It's a very positive two-way

relationship."

Affirmation was viewed as an important part of the conference vision in

producing hope in a congregation. One participant responded, "All of this just gets

affirmed so that when conference talks about this stuff, folks at our church can say,

'We're part of that. We're envisioning that. We're living it out.' And that's very, very

positive."

Third, pastoral leadership was seen as a very important link to how the conference

vision impacts the local church. Participants spoke of the importance of leadership in

casting vision. Members of one church spoke of the excitement and growth being

experienced in their congregation and said that the pastor "had been a tremendous leader

in bringing this together." The pastor of this congregation referred to the importance of

establishing a relationship of trust with the congregation in order to move forward with a

vision for the future.

The importance of the local pastor serving as a catalyst in living out the

conference vision was evident. One lay member said, "It's hard for me to determine

whether this is all directly coming from conference or whether this is just happening

because we have a leader who sees, who has this vision, and is taking us in these

directions."

Fourth, another theme that emerged from the interview was the value of signs of

growth that serve as hope for a congregation. A participant from one church spoke of an

influx of children as their children's ministry began to develop and grow, referring to a

long-time member of the church who said he would love to hear the sound of a baby

crying in church. In response, the participant stated that the congregation had witnessed growth in its children's ministry.

> Well, we've had a lot of babies crying in church. We now have the children's moments on Sunday morning. There are some Sundays when they're in the entire area up there at [the pastor's] feet and halfway going back the aisle. It's just phenomenal. We're growing in every way.

A member of the other church responded by saying their youth ministry has been a sign of hope and vitality as well. Nevertheless, such hope and vitality had often gone unnoticed by others in the congregation. She said, "As the year goes by and the kids do things in the church, I hear people say, 'I didn't know we had all those kids.'"

Another source of hope for one church was the installation of an elevator. This project had been talked about for years but now was finally being accomplished. For them the completion of this project indicated, "We're really not falling apart. We really are moving forward so that those kinds of physical symbols can sometimes really help a congregation vision itself."

Other signs of vitality and hope varied in each congregation; however, one participant captured the importance of living out a vision in a positive way:

> I think what we find in local church life is that those areas where we have hope and excitement usually lead us to a time of health and hope in our congregation. This is the way church life is. If you can find hope in at least one aspect or several aspects in your congregation, that's where the vitality's going to be. That's where the energy is going to be. It sort of becomes momentum in a congregation.

Another aspect of phase two of the study involved conducting two focus group interviews with members of the West Ohio cabinet. Several themes emerged from these interviews in relation to the impact of the conference vision at the local church level from the perspective of the cabinet: buying into the vision, implementation of the vision, the

appointment-making process in relation to the changing role of pastors, and crisis events that foster unification around the vision.

First, many of the district superintendents spoke of "buying into the vision." Since a majority of the participants were appointed by Bishop Ough, cabinet support was important to the impact of the vision. One participant indicated they bought into the vision out of necessity saying, "Our district didn't have any vision, so it filled a void." Another indicated that their district was working out various components of the vision in their areas of ministry. A different superintendent indicated immediate personal support after listening to the vision saying, "That's exactly what ministry is about no matter where you're being sent, so it wasn't hard to buy in or say, 'That's what I'm willing to do.'"

Second, the importance of putting the conference vision into action was evident. Although little doubt existed of the cabinet buying into the vision, questions of implementation were present. One person said, "The vision was being articulated. So how do you make those words real?" This participant went on to speak of various training efforts being implemented in their district in an effort to live out the vision. Another individual spoke of her role as lifting up the denomination's mission statement but then alluded to the problem of fostering support of the mission statement at the local church level. This person referred to beginning with personal beliefs about what needs to be done in the district and the working to "bring a spirit of hope and celebrate the vitality that's already there." Another person spoke specifically of his district's goal to see every church double in attendance in the next five years.

The interview indicated that the participants viewed the Core Process for Making

Disciples as a very positive guiding vision for their work but that living out the vision in practical ways proved to be difficult. Some superintendents offered very clear plans for specifically living out the vision in the local churches in their district, while others did not. The vision must be able to be at work at multiple levels of the system in order to bring real and lasting change.

Third, the participants overwhelmingly agreed that the conference vision was changing the role of pastoral leadership and redefining the process of appointment making. I sensed a great deal of tension surrounding the subject of appointment making. When asked how the vision has impacted the appointment process, a period of silence was broken by one district superintendent jokingly said, "Do you want the official answer or the public answer?"

The Core Process vision has challenged the expectation of where pastors are appointed, when they will be moved, and what their role in the local church is to be. One individual said, "The pastor as chaplain in the village has really been diminished in the Core Process." What has become important is the strategy of the conference to place pastors with the right skills with the churches that are in growing or potentially growing situations. One district superintendent, summarizing what others had already mentioned, said that this practice is radically different than simply basing pastoral appointments on salary and length of tenure:

> We sort of broke that cycle. We've had some radical salary adjustments. You're going to take salary cuts. We've done things on both ends of the spectrum [large salary cuts and large salary raises] and that's, for me, how this has all impacted us.

While this practice is not always popular, those present felt this change in making appointments was the right direction to go. Instead of matching pastors and churches with

salary levels only, one individual referred to the appointment of pastors to church by "trying to figure out who is the best personality type [for a particular church]."

Fourth, many of the participants spoke of the value of crisis events that served to unify members of local congregations. Furthermore, these district superintendents viewed their role as coming alongside these congregations to help foster hope and growth in the midst of the events. The majority of events discussed were depicted as times of crisis. Some crisis events were circumstantial. One participant spoke of a congregation whose building had burned down in a fire. This person alluded to her pastoral role to this congregation saying, "I won't desert you. I'll stay with you all the way through."

Sometimes the crisis event was self-imposed such as when a local pastor attempts to lead a congregation out of the status quo. Such endeavors of leadership can often be a source of problems. Another district superintendent, referring to the comment of "staying with you all the way through," applied those words to standing with a local pastor in times of difficulty when his or her efforts of leadership led to times of crisis in a local church. This person believed that the conference vision enabled them to stand with pastors whose revitalization efforts lead to difficulty in a particular appointment saying, "I think that's a very important aspect of the Core Process." Whether a crisis event is circumstantial or self-imposed, it provides an opportunity to implement aspects of the conference vision at the local church level through the realignment of resources, the appointment of new pastoral leadership, or offering a new direction to a struggling congregation.

The theme that emerged from these crisis events was the opportunity to be unified around a common goal. Although the implementation of the conference vision varied

from district to district, the participants saw the value of being unified around a common

vision for ministry. One person summarized the importance of the vision by saying, "I

find that kind of hopeful, that we have a unified vision."

Phase Three: An Interview with the Bishop

Phase four of the study involved conducting an interview with the resident bishop

of the West Ohio Conference. Several themes emerged from this interview in relation to

the impact of the conference vision at the local church level from the perspective of the

bishop: the bishop's changing role in leading the vision, the change in the appointment-

making process, the value of crisis events, and two major issues currently facing the

conference.

First, the bishop indicated a change in his role in leading the conference vision.

Because Bishop Ough was entering his second quadrennium in West Ohio, I asked him to

identify the current steps being taken to ensure that ownership of the vision transcends

the office of bishop. During his first four years in the conference, Bishop Ough had

focused on creating and communicating the vision of the Core Process. Furthermore, he

had made efforts to create a guiding coalition of leaders to enable the vision to become a

reality. Currently, however, he saw his role beginning to change:

> My role has changed in the last, I would say, eighteen months. Up to that
> period, it was almost exclusively me in the cabinet saying, "Okay, this is
> where we're headed." What I tried to do is slowly step out and encourage
> individuals to articulate the vision. What I've noticed is that more and
> more of the individual superintendents are saying, "This is where we're
> headed." So my role has become much less visible to the cabinet.

Bishop Ough pointed to two key marker events as indication that members of the

cabinet where starting to take initiative. He referred to a special meeting of several

superintendents that took place in August 2004 in which he believed that the cabinet had

"turned a corner." The corner he sensed being turned was that he "didn't have to say anything." According to the bishop, "They were seeking me out and saying, 'Here's how we're going to do this.'"

The other critical marker event took place in November 2003 during a leadership team meeting, which he referred to as "the last rebellion." Because many of the superintendents were experiencing great resistance in their districts, some of them were "digging in one more time" and saying, "You can't do this. The pastors are not getting it, and if they are getting it, they're not responding in ways we'd like to see." This meeting led to a productive discussion about the specific issues related to how to move the vision out of the bishop's office and into the district and local church levels. This desire for a better system of vision management was an indication to the bishop that "we were ready to shift." As a result, the decision was made to make some connectional shifts in terms of what is being called the "vision management system."

A second theme that emerged from this interview dealt with changes in the appointment-making process. Echoing many of the responses given by cabinet members in phase two of this study, Bishop Ough spoke of placing pastors in strategic appointments. A system has been implemented that enables the cabinet to identify two or three churches in every district that they think are the most strategic. These churches are set aside and labeled as priority appointments. This system is a shift from the common pattern of working down a list of churches starting with the one with the largest salary. The bishop admitted that this change in making appointments has created some disruption and second guessing on the part of others in the conference. Nevertheless, he viewed this particular change in the process as an effort to be strategic.

Furthermore, the selection and appointment of district superintendents has also been clearly impacted by the conference vision. Bishop Ough indicated that he has been very intentional about selecting superintendents saying that he believes it the "most important thing a bishop does." Having appointed most of the current cabinet members himself, the bishop candidly said that he is looking for persons "who can be strong vision champions" and who have successfully demonstrated this ability in previous appointments. Because the conference vision specifically targets the local church as the most effective place of disciple making, the bishop said that he looks for persons who have demonstrated some growth in previous appointments as potential superintendents saying, "It's hard to lead something you've never experienced." With regard to the impact of the conference vision on the appointment-making process, the bishop thought that it has "impacted the selection of superintendents probably more than anything."

Third, the theme of crisis events emerged in the interview with the bishop much as it did in the interviews with members of the cabinet. Although crisis events can take place in a variety of ways, a common experience in many churches is to allow the crisis event to be a time of examination of values and direction. In one struggling church in southern Ohio, for example, the church saw the crisis of their declining numbers as an opportunity to reexamine their purpose for existence. During this experience the congregation decided to relocate from its existing downtown building to one that is in a more accessible location to the general population of the area. The bishop indicated that this church learned to see the building as a tool for making disciples and articulated their vision for ministry saying, "We came to understand that there are four thousand people in the community and one thousand go to church. It's our job to try to reach them."

In another example, the bishop referred to a congregation that experienced a flood, which led them to ask the question, "Do we keep trying to fix up this place or do we do something else?" Such a crisis event, whether circumstantial or self-imposed, gives congregations the chance to look at the future and ask, "What do we want to do?" According to Bishop Ough, attrition is often so slow in many churches a crisis mode rarely exists that forces people to examine its mission realistically in light of the future. When a congregation begins to understand that they have a mission, they begin to have this hope that they can make a difference in their community and begin to make some strategic decisions about the future.

One of the primary roles of district superintendents, according to the bishop, is to serve as more of a consultant to congregations during crisis events and other strategic situations to help them move forward. Such intervention is one aspect of the ongoing effort to redefine the role of the superintendent. Rather than simply waiting for a crisis event to occur, Bishop Ough sees the cabinet's role as being more intentional about strategically intervening in the lives of individual congregations. Sometimes a strategic appointment can become a crisis event for a church, and the cabinet works to identify places where a "combination of readiness exists, where we think we can create a healthy urgency, and where we think we have the right pastoral leadership."

Although some crisis events can be the result from catastrophes such as fire or flood and others can simply be the reality of declining congregational life, Bishop Ough pointed out that for an organization to change a sense of urgency is needed saying, "One of the things a leader has to do is create this urgency." In the life of the conference, Bishop Ough referred to his second year in office when he traveled to each district and

began pressing pastors to become transformational leaders. The tension that resulted from those discussions simultaneously encouraged many while it discouraged others. Some pastors thought that the standard was being set too high while others saw it as a sign that "God has more for us to do." Overall, the bishop believes that these crisis events enable the vision to continue to impact the conference saying, "I think there is hope that has been released in the system."

Fourth, the bishop alluded to two major issues that currently face the West Ohio Conference. Although neither issue is unique to West Ohio, both threaten to minimize the impact of the conference vision. One of those issues is the sense of theological disunity. Essentially the conference, much like the denomination, is divided into two camps: the theologically liberal and the theologically conservative. Unfortunately, rather than striving to work together, the disunity that exists often brings division. The difficulty then becomes implementing a common, unifying vision in the midst of such division. The other major issue being faced by the conference deals with short-term financial problems. While costs and expenditures increase, apportionment receipts do not. Just as theological divisions threaten the impact of the conference vision, so does the funding issue. Such problematic issues are no doubt being faced by other conferences and can potentially serve as crisis events in West Ohio. These two critical issues can either potentially impact the vitality or impede the progress of the vision being implemented in West Ohio. Bishop Ough echoed the frustration of many in West Ohio:

> In almost every conversation you get into, somehow it comes back to one
> of those two issues. Either we don't get along well enough that we can
> move forward together or we don't have enough money to do the basics
> let alone start adding something.

Summary of Significant Findings

Ten significant findings resulted from this study: (1) Local churches that participated in the survey experienced statistically significant changes in every Beeson Church Health Characteristic except mobilized laity; (2) The health characteristic of engaging worship was rated the strongest in both the 2001 and 2004 studies; (3) Authentic community, which was rated the seventh weakest health characteristic in 2001, was perceived to be the second strongest in 2004; (4) Empowering leadership was rated as the weakest church health characteristic in the 2004 study; (5) Participating churches reported a positive five-year rate of change in membership, baptisms, and average worship attendance, and a negative rate of change in conversions; (6) The conference vision was perceived by pastors and lay members as a source of affirmation and permission in the practice of ministry; (7) The conference vision was perceived by participants as a catalyst for resource alignment; (8) The conference vision was perceived by conference leadership as significantly impacting the role of pastoral leadership, especially with regard to appointment making and the selection of district superintendents; (9) Crisis events, both positive and negative in nature, were viewed as signs of hope that growth and vitality were possible; and, (10) Two major issues currently face the West Ohio Conference, theological division and a funding crisis, which could either impede or improve the impact of the conference vision.

These findings provide interesting insight on what impact the vision of the Core Process for Making Disciples is having on the West Ohio Conference. The data is further examined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This research project originated out of a desire to determine how the guiding

vision of the West Ohio Conference, initiated by Bishop Ough and other conference

leaders, has impacted the health of local congregations of the conference. The hope of

this study was to measure changes in church health characteristics between the years

2001 and 2004 as well as changes in church growth demographics for local churches in

the conference between the years of 1999 and 2004. Furthermore, this study sought to

assess local church and conference leaders' perception of the vision's impact. Prior

research was conducted in 2001 by Law shortly following Bishop Ough's 2001 episcopal

address that publicly unveiled the conference vision. The research for this study was

conducted in 2004 at the end of Bishop Ough's first quadrennium of service in West

Ohio. The findings of this study can be used to help conference leadership measure the

viability of the conference vision at the local church, district, and conference levels. It

can also be a source for the denomination in the effort to measure the effectiveness of

transformational leadership.

Comparison between West Ohio 2001 and West Ohio 2004

Much has changed in the West Ohio Conference between 2001 and 2004, yet

much has remained the same. The first research question guiding this study examined the

changes in Beeson church health characteristics from 2001 to 2004. Local congregations

participating in the 2004 study reported change in all but one of the eight church health

characteristics. Three of the statistically significant changes were positive while four

were negative. As in 2001, local congregations in 2004 still perceive the quality and

effectiveness of engaging worship as the strongest indicator of church health. Such a finding makes sense in that corporate worship is often viewed as the most visible measurement of the vitality of a congregation. Because the church is limited in its methods of measuring effectiveness, average worship attendance is still a primary way of gauging church health and growth. In a similar pattern of consistency between 2001 and 2004, passionate spirituality was rated as one of the strongest indicators of church health and transforming discipleship was viewed as one of the weakest church health characteristics. One interesting difference found in 2004 is that local churches perceive the role of authentic community to be a stronger indicator of church health than in 2001.

The health characteristics of engaging worship, passionate spirituality, and authentic community, which showed a positive change from 2001 to 2004, are perhaps interrelated phenomenon. If congregations view the corporate worship experience as the strongest expression of church health, a sense of deep, passionate spirituality is bound to exist. Furthermore, congregations that greatly anticipate gathering together for weekly worship services are likely to possess a sense of connectedness expressed as authentic community.

The four church health characteristics that declined in 2004 demonstrate a need to focus on deeper levels of transformation in the local church. The reported decline of the characteristics of empowering leadership, functional structures, intentional evangelism, and transforming discipleship may be a result of the local church overemphasizing the importance of weekly worship services. In a society of rampant consumerism, success is often claimed by many churches through the increase in worship attendance alone. While it is certainly a valid measurement of vitality for a local congregation, it is by no means

meant to be the only determination of health. Too often local churches fail to emphasize the need for other areas of the Church's mission, namely evangelism and discipleship. This reality offers an answer to the fact that while churches in the study reported an increase in membership, baptisms, and worship attendance, conversions were on the decline. Disciple making in local churches includes attracting an increasingly growing number of people to weekly worship services but also must go further in fostering maturity in believers and sending people into the world in mission. In the Western expression of church, Christian identity is often defined as church membership (Guder 169). In United Methodism, church membership is a primary tool for measuring the vitality of a congregation. Conversions are reported as those who join a local church by profession of faith. Ideally, however, church membership is meant to be a part or a member of the body of Christ. The motivation behind becoming a member of a local church must not focus on what can be received as a benefit to the self but what can be given to benefit others. The implication of this understanding of membership is that individuals are an incarnational part of the body and, thus, active in the mission of the Church in the world (169).

While membership and average worship attendance have increased over the past five years for churches participating in this study, overall the West Ohio Conference decreased in both of these measurements of church growth during the same time period. The conference did experience a 2.3 percent increase in worship attendance in 2003. The growth in membership and average worship attendance reported by local congregations in this study was greatly impacted by a few larger churches that experienced a significant five-year rate of change. This observation may be attributed to the Hawthorne effect,

suggesting that those churches who participated in the survey have been more motivated to embrace the conference vision. Nevertheless, it may also reflect the conference trend that suggests that while many larger churches are attracting new people, many smaller churches are not.

The most significant difference between the West Ohio Conference of 2001 and the West Ohio Conference of 2004 is the impact of the conference vision on the role of pastoral leadership. This finding sheds light on the second research question of this study that examines the perceived impact of the vision. One clear perception of participants in this study is that the role of clergy leadership-bishop, district superintendents, and pastors-has significantly changed since the initial communication of the vision in 2001 and that such change will continue to be necessary as the vision emerges. The most prevalent perception discovered in the interviews is that clergy leadership must not only be able to communicate vision but also must discover ways to empower others to live out that vision.

The vision's impact on clergy leadership suggests that conflict will be inevitable. Conflict has and will continue to result from the vision being implemented at all levels of the conference. Such problems are created by effective leadership, which changes what is expected from others in the organization (McManus 192). Resolving conflict and problems that occur as a result of the vision should not deter the implementation of the vision because a change initiative will always create in conflict. If an organization ever finds itself in the position of having too few problems, it may have too little vision. Such is not currently the case in West Ohio. As the standard for both the quality of pastoral leadership and the fruitfulness of congregations is raised, problems will most certainly be

experienced.

The conference vision, especially as it unfolds in the future will call leaders and churches to deeper levels of continual change in order to become healthy, growing, spiritually vital, risking-taking centers for making and equipping disciples of Jesus for the purpose of transforming the world. While many congregations in West Ohio have yet to embrace such change, there are some that have come to understand that the local church is to be a gathering of people who are in the process of being changed and who invite others to join them in this adventure and in this life (Robinson 37).

The findings of this study suggest that much of the future impact of the conference vision will rely heavily on the church health characteristics of empowering leadership and mobilized laity. These indicators of church health either did not change from the 2001 surveys, as in the case of mobilized laity, or was perceived as weaker in the 2004 surveys, as was the perception of empowering leadership. These and other findings listed in Table 4.4 help to answer the third research question of this study in that the perceived impact of the conference vision correlates those health characteristics that are specifically related to an empowering leadership that calls others to mission.

The living hope, to which Peter called the people of the Early Church, encouraged them to live out their mission in light of the struggles they faced. While the people of the United Methodist Church are certainly faced with many struggles, Peter's first audience was certainly struggling more than the West Ohio Conference. There exists unlimited opportunities for local churches to be involved in mission in every local community in the conference. For the vision to continue to impact West Ohio, pastoral leadership will need to empower others to be involved in such ministry so as to mobilize the laity in the

mission of the Church.

The Diffusion of Innovation: The Impact of the Conference Vision

Vision takes time. As a strategic plan for change is developed, communicated, and implemented in an organization, certain processes can be observed and even measured. The development and communication of a vision can begin to be accomplished in a relatively short period of time by a small number of people. In comparison, the implementation stage of a vision of change requires the longest period of time but can reach a point when it becomes a regular part of the life of the organization (Rogers and Shoemaker 173). That is part of the hope of all transformational leadership- that the vision of the preferred future will eventually become the reality of the organization.

In this study of the vision of the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church, definite patterns of how the vision is growing in its impact on local churches correlate to Rogers and Shoemaker's research of the diffusion of innovations in which a vision of change is communicated and implemented in an organizational system (5). For example, specific people in the life of the West Ohio Conference can be identified as innovators. Certainly, since his coming to West Ohio, Bishop Ough has served as one of the chief innovators of the vision; however, many components of the vision existed prior to his arrival. Some districts, such as the Columbus South District, were using Core Process language to guide its ministries years before the unveiling of the conference vision in 2001. Others have served in major roles as innovators of the vision subsequent to and since the beginning of Bishop Ough's tenure. Since 2001, the bishop and many of these other innovative leaders have worked together to develop, communicate, and

implement the Core Process vision for the West Ohio Conference. Rogers and Shoemaker suggest that about 2.5 percent of the population of any organization could be classified as innovators (173). The 140 lay and clergy leaders that participated in the "Together a Vision" event in February 2001 would be a fair representation of the lay and clergy leadership of the conference as a whole. Many of these innovators hold or have held high profile leadership positions at the conference or district levels. Most are now serving or continue to serve at the local church level. The role that these risk-taking innovators play in the life of the conference will need to continue to impact the system in the years that follow if the vision is to thrive.

Many of the recent emerging leaders in West Ohio who have quickly bought in to the Core Process philosophy, including many of the district superintendents selected by Bishop Ough as well as other strategically appointed pastors, have been and will continue to be invaluable to the impact of the vision. While not necessarily classified as innovators, they have been some of the first to adopt the conference vision. Rogers and Shoemaker refer to these influential people as early adopters, making up about 13.5 pecent of the organizational population (173). West Ohio leadership has been particularly careful in recent years to lift up particular leaders and congregations as success stories in conference-wide communications and presentations. Examples may include churches that have merged in an effort to better reach their community, churches that have entered into strategic partnerships, other congregations who have been classified as high priority missional appointments, as well as others who have focused on specific aspects of the Core Process. The success of many of these early adopters helps to validate the impact the conference vision.

As a whole, West Ohio appears to be having an increase in the positive growth pattern of average worship attendance. Rev. Joyce Fry, the assistant to the bishop in West Ohio, charted the growth patterns of West Ohio churches from 1995 to 2000 and from 2000 to 2002. She found that from 1995 to 2000 approximately 42.2 percent of the 1,205 churches in the conference reported a positive change in average worship attendance. During the period of 2000 to 2002, 45.3 percent of 1,206 churches reported positive growth.

While this study does not necessarily provide indisputable evidence of the impact of the conference vision on local churches, it does demonstrate the impact on these innovators and early adopters. Between 2001 and 2004, the vision has been developed and communicated in highly strategic ways by many talented and passionate people. The work of these innovators and early adopters in implementing the vision is making a difference in the overall health of the West Ohio Conference. Others are beginning to see the value of the vision. A growing majority of people understand that this vision is not simply the latest program that the conference is using in an effort to save the denomination or to stimulate support of conference agendas. Rather, the implementation of the vision in ways that substantially change the way the conference functions–the approach to appointment making, for example–indicates to a growing number of people that this new approach is the way West Ohio will be doing business for some time. Rogers and Shoemaker refer to this larger group of people who eventually begin to follow the lead of the innovators and early adopters as the early majority (173).

As the conference vision continues to be put into action in strategic ways, the success or failure of such attempts of implementation will strongly impact this early

majority. This group will be the key to the crucial shift in momentum that will be necessary in the next few years because, as Rogers and Shoemaker suggest, this early majority comprises 34 percent of the organization (173). This early majority will likely be comprised of a greater number of people beyond the cabinet who represent the local church, such as pastors and lay leaders from churches who have embraced the vision and grown in impact.

A Personal Testimony

A local church's perception of engaging worship can greatly influence whether or not the early majority begins to support the conference vision. For example, the appointment in which I am currently serving is a direct result of the vision. Because of its location in a rapidly growing area, this local church was designated as a high priority missional appointment in 2003. In the first eighteen months of this appointment, the average worship attendance has increased by 82 percent. The momentum gained by a stronger sense of engaging worship not only creates an atmosphere of hope but one of excitement. In the winter of 2004, I preached a sermon series based on the book of 1 Peter entitled "The Future's So Bright We Gotta Wear Shades." The living hope found in the resurrection of Christ was the underlying theme of each message. On the last day of the series, as I stood up to preach, I looked out on an entire congregation of people who, based on their own collective initiative, were wearing sunglasses. I knew immediately that something significant had occurred and that we would look back at that moment as a turning point in the revitalization of this church. As more local churches begin to experience the kind of significant growth that can be directly tied to the conference vision, a growing majority of people will be willing to adopt it. In other words, success

will breed success.

The Calming of a Chronically Anxious System

The West Ohio Conference, for a variety of reasons, could be classified as an anxious organization. A recent feasibility study initiated by the conference showed that while the bishop himself is well liked, conference leadership as a whole is not trusted by people in the local church (Panas, Jerold, Linzy and Associates 67). Circumstances such as the gaping divisions in theological perspectives that mark the West Ohio Conference as well as a mounting financial crisis, to name a few, have led to a sense of anxiety that has plagued the conference throughout the last decade. These and other issues will need to be dealt with in the future.

A chronically anxious system has certain traits that describe how the members of that system function. Jim Herrington, R. Robert Creech, and Trisha Taylor suggest a pattern to these characteristics in an organization filled with anxiety: (1) a heightened level of reactivity, (2) the herding instinct, (3) blame displacement, (4) a quick fix, and (5) poor leadership (63-65).

The first characteristic of a chronically anxious system is the presence of a heightened level of reactivity. In such a situation, people within an organization tend to react to one another in automatic and instinctive kinds of ways. Without clearly thinking about how to respond, people often react out of emotion. In such a heated, emotionally charged atmosphere, everything is viewed as dire and serious. In recent years, many sessions of annual conference have been characterized by highly emotional and reactive responses as controversial issues and agendas have been brought to the forefront. Rather than discussing such issues in light of a guiding vision that determines the direction of the

conference, many members of the annual conference have generally reacted with explosive emotion. In the chaos that ensues, chronic anxiety marks the system.

The consistency of leadership by Bishop Ough and others, as well as the emergence of a unified conference vision, have served to instill a growing sense of hope in members of the conference. In focus group interviews, statements made by pastors and lay members alike suggested that the conference vision provided a sense of affirmation for their ministries. Such findings suggest that people are viewing the one clear vision being communicated by West Ohio leadership as having a calming effect on the conference. While the vision is a positive step in transforming the conference, more time and energy will be required for deep change to occur throughout the system.

The theological divisions that exist in West Ohio mirror the divisions of the denomination as a whole (Caldwell; "Methodists Divided"; Heidinger; Mahoney). These divisions greatly contribute to the level of anxiety plaguing the system. In such an environment, a push for conformity is often experienced, what has been referred to as the herding instinct. In West Ohio, especially in years such as 2003 when delegates to the general and jurisdictional conferences have been elected, great tension resulted from the herding instinct. Each side of the theological division, both conservative and liberal, is responsible for contributing to the push to conform to one side or the other. The result of such all-or-nothing thinking is that the mission of the church often gets pushed aside as feelings become more important than ideas.

Although such experiences have caused long lasting wounds and damaged many relationships within the conference, one rallying point seems to be the conference vision. Both sides of the theological divide appear attracted to the Core Process vision, partly

because it allows them to focus their energies in reaching and helping people experience the grace of God. How those with differing theologies respond to one another will ultimately impact the effectiveness of conference's witness because disagreeing Christianly is one of the most powerful forms of incarnational witness the Church can practice (Guder 165).

Blame displacement, the third characteristic of a chronically anxious system, describes the tendency of people to look outward rather than inward for explanations. As many local churches decline in health and vitality, my opinion is that many assess blame on others rather than engaging in self-examination. Some blame the changing culture for their decline. Others often hold larger, growing churches responsible for taking people away from their congregations. Still other churches often blame the conference for not sending the right pastor to them. One specific benefit of the conference vision is that it refutes any attempt to displace blame. The Core Process vision allows conference and district leadership to say to a given congregation, "What is it that this church wants to do?" and offers a plan to hold them accountable and help them accomplish the goal of reaching new people if they so choose. The conference vision sends a clear statement to all that West Ohio is about the business of making disciples of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, the vision is valuable in addressing the fourth characteristic of an anxious system, the quick fix. For years, various reasons have led local churches to view conference leadership with skepticism. Each time a new program or initiative was presented, many were unresponsive, seeing such campaigns as the latest quick fix. Such initiatives were often ignored with the understanding that they would be short-lived anyway. The Core Process vision, however, shows no sign of going away. Much more

than a quick fix, the conference vision seeks to initiate systemic changes that will

positively impact the conference for years to come.

One primary systemic change involves the restructuring of the West Ohio

Conference for the purpose of realigning its resources with the vision. At the time of this

writing, a proposal is being developed and discussed that would seek to restructure the

conference into an additive and distinctive system that focuses on the vitality of the local

church ("Alignment of the Districts and Conference" 1). The emphasis of the

recommendations of this restructuring effort involves a new paradigm in which

conference agencies and staff exist to provide support and resources to the district, which,

in turn, exists to resource the local church for growth and reproduction. The local church

functions as the best arena for making and equipping disciples of Jesus Christ. To enable

this restructuring effort to work, the possibility of other changes in the system exist, such

as realigning the fourteen existing districts into geographical regions, realigning the work

of the district superintendents, and linking local churches together into clusters for

accountability, training, and partnering in ministry. Such a systemic change is anything

but a quick fix, rather, it is being viewed as a strategic way to make better use of both

human and financial resources. The pool of highly effective leadership in West Ohio,

much like the current resources for funding, is limited. If the conference views the local

church as the primary arena for disciple making, then a top-heavy, bureaucratic system

makes poor use of limited resources. The proposal for restructuring and realignment,

which would not be initiated without the guiding conference vision, appears to be

designed to produce long-lasting effects.

In a chronically anxious system, there is often a tendency for leadership to be of

poor quality, which operates reactively instead of proactively. Such leadership lacks the value-driven strategy that offers a sense of direction to the organization. Many of the strategic decisions, such as the changing approach to appointment making and the realignment of resources, suggest the presence of quality leadership with thoughtfully held principles. Such value-based decisions carried out by stable leadership, leads to a calming effect on the organization. In West Ohio a sense of excitement and hope is beginning to emerge as the conference vision is seen as a path for others to follow (Panas, Linzy, and Associates 67).

Rogers and Shoemakers' theory of the diffusion of innovation seemed to be at work in the interviews of conference leadership. A few of the members of the cabinet appeared to belong to the category of innovators. These district superintendents, along with a few of their predecessors, had helped initiate the conference vision when Bishop Ough had first arrived in West Ohio. Other participants could be classified as early adopters. The focus group data suggests that as early adopters bought into the vision, other leadership in the conference wanted to examine the value of the Core Process as well. Some statements by members of the cabinet indicated that they might be a part of the early majority because although they were willing to follow the vision, they were still deliberate and cautious in implementing it in their districts. Few, if any, could be described as the late majority as no sense of skepticism was found among members of the group. Furthermore, none of the participants would fall into Rogers and Shoemaker's category of laggards. If they could be described that way, Bishop Ough would certainly not have appointed them to the cabinet.

The achievement of the goals of the conference vision is improbable without the calming impact of stable leadership. The Core Process vision of the West Ohio Conference is beginning to bring a sense of calm to a chronically anxious system. As the vision continues to emerge and impact the structure of the conference, the system may continue to remain anxious for different reasons. Rather than being chronically anxious, however, the conference may experience the uneasiness of painful, but necessary, change. In the long run, however, the hope is that the change initiated by transformational leadership will supply a much needed calming effect to the system.

Implications of the Study

Many issues of hope and the impact of stable leadership were prevalent in this study. Leadership that simultaneously affirms and challenges offers hope to an organization. Such leadership grants permission to others to be in ministry and at the same time greatly influences the direction of that ministry. The vision that leadership communicates to an organization can be, in and of itself, a source of hope. The findings of this study suggest that in West Ohio hope is emerging in the conference. Not only is the vision influencing this conference, but the transformational impact of the conference vision extends beyond the borders of its own judicatory as other conferences show strong interest in the efforts of West Ohio (Whitaker).

As the conference vision continues to emerge, one important implication will be the changing role of pastoral leadership. The church of the twenty-first century requires a new kind of leadership, one that gets to the heart of transformed lives and communities. The vision enables conference leadership to define and provide a sense of accountability to an articulated set of pastoral standards so that in the future West Ohio will be able to

focus its resources on ensuring better leadership at the local church level. Such a radical shift in understanding can be tied to the vision. The role of bishops and district superintendents, changing from administrating the status quo to leading transformation will also prove to be a key to the overall impact of the vision.

West Ohio, in recent years, has experienced a tremendous shift in its approach to the state of United Methodism. No doubt, conference leadership has been concerned about the downward trend in membership in years past (Ough). Nevertheless, few approaches have suggested the kind of systemic change inherent in the Core Process vision. Not only is there rhetoric concerning what needs to be done, but decisive actions are being taken to bring resources in alignment with the vision. The goal is clear: to be a conference in which every congregation is a healthy, growing, spiritually vital, risking-taking center for making and equipping disciples of Jesus for the purpose of transforming the world. The path to achieve the goal is also clear: to emphasize the core components of hospitality, worship, spiritual formation, and service.

This study builds upon prior research regarding church health and allows for further use of the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire as a viable tool for measuring the effectiveness of a church. In many ways, the eight Beeson church health characteristics match the four aspects of the Core Process and, thus, provide a way to measure the impact of the conference vision both now and in the future.

Possibly the greatest strength of the study was the value of combining the quantitative research of the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire with the qualitative findings of the focus group interviews. The longitudinal aspect of the case study provided input from a cross-section of people at different levels from local churches to conference

leadership. Emphasizing and assessing the effect that hopeful leadership has on a system is important. When an organization can genuinely look forward to the future, it has a stronger probability of achieving its goals. The church is a living witness to the hope of Christ, and its leadership should exemplify such hope.

Limitations of the Study

Reflecting upon the design and implementation of this study as well as the data that was collected, some areas of limitation emerge. One weakness involves the rate of response regarding local church participation. Since Law's study served as a baseline for this study, efforts were made to replicate aspects of the prior research. Law surveyed forty-five churches in West Ohio and received 1,139 completed questionnaires. This study attempted to include the same forty-five churches with twenty agreeing to participate. From those twenty-one churches, 215 surveys were collected. One factor possibly contributing to this lower response rate was that instructions were given to pastors either to distribute the survey to the entire congregation or to members of the leadership board. Although permission was given for pastors to make as many copies as needed, few churches returned more than the fifteen copies that were sent to them.

With the change in clergy and lay leadership in local United Methodist churches, many of the congregations that were invited to participate indicated no recollection of participating in the 2001 study. Some agreed to participate but did not follow through despite being contacted personally on the phone. Others were either wary or weary of being examined once again. As Law notes, church health is a relatively new paradigm for many in West Ohio, and an underlying suspicion still remains (111).

Another limitation of this study involves the number of pastors and lay members

who participated in the focus group interviews. Although efforts were made to invite a random sample of ten churches to this aspect of the study, ultimately only two participated. The quality of data was affected by the limited number of participants. Perhaps a better approach would have been to identify two samples of churches, one group consisting of churches that are implementing specific aspects of the conference vision and another group made up of churches that are not.

Quite possibly the most revealing data of the study came from the focus interviews conducted with members of the West Ohio cabinet and the bishop. These subjects were not only willing to participate in the study but provided candid and detailed answers to the questions posed to them. Unfortunately, the quality of tape recordings, especially from cabinet interviews, limited the findings. Had the quality been better, more data might have been retrieved. No doubt the findings would have been more detailed had it not been for the technological problems in collecting the data.

Contribution to Research Methodology

This study contributed to the body of research that measures church health and church growth. Specifically this study revealed the value of assessing the impact of vision and leadership to church growth and health. The use of the relatively new Beeson Church Health Questionnaire offers further evidence to the value of this tool.

This study confirms the importance of transformational leadership and suggests that ongoing measurement of such initiatives be continued. Few churches, let alone denominational judicatories, have undertaken the task of scientifically measuring the effectiveness of their visioning strategies. This study, combined with the baseline data found in Law's study, provide precedent for further research in the West Ohio

Conference as well as in other annual conferences throughout the United Methodist

Church.

Further Studies

A handful of researchers have tested the validity of the Beeson Church Health

Questionnaire prior to this study. Additional use of the instrument and the needed

modifications will continue to be necessary for the tool to benefit the general church

further. Perhaps an implementation of the instrument at the district and conference levels

as well as in the local church would also prove beneficial. As West Ohio seeks to monitor

the impact of the conference vision, the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire would be a

useful tool. Regular measurement of the health and growth of the conference, especially

in relation to the Core Process vision, would no doubt provide invaluable information to

conference leadership.

Another suggestion for further study would be to replicate this and Law's study in

the next few years, perhaps midway through and at the end of Bishop Ough's second

quadrennium of service in West Ohio. The conference has already experienced

significant shifts in focus and will continue to be transformed over the next few years. I

would suggest that another researcher not only examine the correlation between the effect

of vision on church health and growth but also develop a way of evaluating the

perceptions of local church members.

Since conference data shows that approximately 25 percent of local churches in

West Ohio have experienced at least moderate growth in recent years, a study should be

implemented to identify what common characteristics these growing churches exhibit. By

discovering what these churches hold in common, perhaps such characteristics could be

replicated in other situations.

Because the church health characteristics of intentional evangelism, empowering leadership, and mobilized laity were rated weaker than others in this study, a survey of local churches should be implemented to assess the role of transformational leadership in improving areas of radical hospitality and risk-taking mission. Such a research could be accomplished through the use of the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire or by the creation of a newly designed survey to study a local congregation or a group of churches that have experienced transformation in these areas.

Personal Reflections

The West Ohio Conference currently finds itself in a crucial time in its 37 year history. Within the conference a great theological division exists concerning how to do ministry in a changing culture as well as a shortfall of financial resources that threatens to prevent the practice of any ministry. In this study the value of crisis events and defining moments was discovered. Perhaps the current crises in the conference are leading to a defining moment for West Ohio. The current theological divisions and the mounting fiscal crisis can either serve as obstacles that impede the advancement of the conference vision or opportunities that validate the implementation of the vision. One thing is certain, the West Ohio Conference stands in need of the kind of transformational leadership that will not only offer hope in the midst of crisis but take the necessary actions to allow hope become reality.

The health of the conference is slowly, but steadily, improving. Signs of vitality and hope are emerging. The reversal of the decline in average worship attendance in 2003 serves as evidence that the conference is beginning to turn a corner. The renewed interest

in developing and training pastors to lead congregations toward a preferred future is another indication of the vision's impact. Nevertheless, the slow pace of change serves as a reminder that easy triumphalism will not be the case in West Ohio, for along with signs of hope and vitality is evidence of pessimism and realism. The living hope of which Peter spoke to first-century Christians suggests that God will use the Church in any era in which it exists, but it will not be easy. As West Ohio wrestles to embrace the kind of change necessary for renewal, this living hope is a reminder that the Church will struggle to the end.

The importance of calm leadership in guiding an anxious system toward a clearly defined goal has been an invaluable personal discovery. Through this project and my year of study in the Beeson Pastor Program, I have seen a transformation in the way I live and how I offer pastoral leadership. In previous ministry settings, little did I realize that my own attitudes and insecurities not only impacted the way I was perceived but, more importantly, the way I perceived others. Since gaining this insight, I have been particularly careful to manage my own emotions so that my leadership would be a source of stability in the church.

An effective leader remains calm in the midst of crisis, offering a tangible sense of hope to the anxious. Few accounts illustrate this fact better than the actions of legendary NFL quarterback Joe Montana. The scene was the 1989 Super Bowl. Montana's San Francisco 49ers trailed the Cincinnati Bengals by three points with 3:20 remaining in the game. Montana's team had the ball on their eight yard line, and the 49ers were huddled in their own end zone to wait out a long TV time-out. Recalling the

overwhelming anxiety of the moment, San Francisco offensive tackle Harris Barton tells

a story that speaks to Montana's ability to offer calm leadership in times of high stress:

> "I'm nervous and tight, and I'm goin' off," Barton recalls. "I'm telling everyone, 'We gotta win!' Joe says, 'Hey, H., look down there above the far corner of the end zone. There's John Candy!' "I look and sure enough, there's John Candy, eating popcorn." The tension seemed to leak out of the huddle as 11 players turned to watch the fat comedian enjoying a snack. Then the 49ers began to work their way downfield like a marching band. (Ostler)

Montana's team scored the winning touchdown with thirty-four seconds remaining in the

game.

The calling of God on my life is to offer the kind of pastoral leadership in the

church that leads to transformation and revitalization. For me, such leadership involves

proclaiming and projecting the reality of hopefulness for both individuals and for

institutions. This holy work is being accomplished through preaching the Word, praying

continually, leading humbly, and listening to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

With the realty of Christ's continual presence, along with the promise of Christ's ultimate

return, something better awaits those who follow Jesus. Such is the reality of "living

hope."

APPENDIX A

Episcopal Address

West Ohio Annual Conference
The United Methodist Church
June 8, 2001

INTRODUCTION

Grace to you and peace from God our Creator and the Lord Jesus Christ, who is risen and is among us this day.

As I look out across this auditorium and survey the gathered leadership of the West Ohio Conference, I am reminded of Paul's greeting in his one-page letter to Philemon. Paul's words express my sentiments at this moment for each of you. "Every time your name comes up in my prayers, I say, 'Oh, thank you, God!' I keep hearing of the love and faith you have for the Lord Jesus, which brims over to other Christians. And I keep praying that this faith we hold in common keeps showing up in the good things we do, and that people recognize Christ in all of it. Friend, you have no idea how good your love makes me feel, double so when I see your hospitality to fellow believers." (Philemon 1:4-7, The Message)

I have been looking forward to delivering this Episcopal Address for several months, and the opportunity it affords to invite each of you to join me in discerning and articulating a shared vision for a vital, growing, servant conference focused on making disciples of Jesus Christ.

It is my understanding this is the first time an Episcopal Address has been presented at a West Ohio Conference session. Whether this is true or not, I want to express my deep appreciation to the Annual Conference Planning Committee and its able chairperson, Rev. Alan Sippel, for their invitation and generous allocation of time in a busy agenda. I do hope, however, that this will not be the one and only opportunity I will have to address the conference during my tenure as your bishop.

In February, I invited 140 clergy and lay leaders from across the conference to join me in a visioning retreat called "Together A Vision." The retreat was designed to begin the process of developing a shared vision of disciple-making for the West Ohio Conference. We now continue that process as we gather here at Lakeside to carry on our Wesleyan tradition of conferencing. The core of my address today is the same presentation I shared at the "Together A Vision" retreat.

I invite you to pray with me. Gracious and Holy God, creator of every good gift, we come to you in these moments seeking your blessing. Bless us with open eyes to see you in the face of one another. Bless us with open ears to hear your Word for us today. Bless us with discerning hearts to perceive your truth and your path for us. Bless us with

a rich dialogue that honors the opinions and respects the dignity of each of your children gathered here today. This is our prayer, offered in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

We are living at a threshold time. We are not only living at the threshold of the first decade of the twenty-first century and the third millennium since the birth of Jesus, we are living at the threshold of a world changing at blinding speed. The West Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church is at the threshold of a world changing at blinding speed and at the threshold of an unparalleled opportunity to respond faithfully to the command of Jesus to disciple the world.

While we live in a time of unprecedented problems from racism to the rejection of moral values necessary for a just and cohesive society, we also are at the threshold of unprecedented opportunity to change the direction of our culture. There has never been such a sharp distinction between the Christian message and ethic, and the cultural message and ethic, as there is today. It is a time when the gospel message can be seen in sharp distinction to the message of our culture. It is also a time when there appears to be unparalleled hunger for God reflected in the spiritual quest of persons of every culture around the world. The population of West Ohio reflects that spiritual quest and there is, therefore, a readiness to hear the essential truths of the Christian message. As your new bishop, I believe we are ready to move forward together. I believe we must move forward together.

In an effort to take seriously this threshold moment and the future that lies before us I invite you to join me in exploring how the West Ohio Conference can develop a truly comprehensive, strategic, systemic, Holy Spirit-inspired approach to congregational vitality, growth and reaching new people for Christ.

This is a time to vision together.

A vision is a concrete picture or image of a preferred future. It is foolish to gather to vision together if we do not hold the common conviction that God is calling us to move beyond our current reality. It is presumptuous to gather to vision together if we do not embrace the biblical truth that vision is a gift from God, imparted to **all** of God's people. I alone do not have the only or complete picture of our preferred future in West Ohio. God's vision has been given to all of us and to many who are back home in our nearly 1300 congregations. God's call and direction for a <u>vital</u>, <u>growing</u>, <u>servant</u> conference will only become clear as we work, pray, dialogue, discern and vision together.

JESUS' MODEL OF DISCIPLE MAKING

I believe our visioning must be grounded in scripture. Our vision on how to best live into Christ's Great Commission must be grounded in understanding how Jesus approached making disciples. Throughout the gospels there is a pattern to how Jesus led others to see a new reality, to lead transformed lives and to join the God-movement.

Look with me at the story of blind Bartimaeus in Mark 10:46-52, as just one example. What are Jesus' actions? What are Jesus' behaviors? What do they tell us about how we are to make disciples of all nations?

There are four essential movements in Jesus' model of disciple making. First, Jesus invites us into the community-into the very center of God's grace. Hearing the blind man cry out for mercy and hearing the crowds telling Bartimaeus to be quiet, Jesus <u>stood</u> <u>still</u> and said, "Call him here." If we are to make disciples of Jesus, we must have congregations that call people to Christ, that extend hospitality, that show people they are valued and loved by God.

Second, Jesus encourages us to become vulnerable, to take off our masks and acknowledge our deepest pain, our greatest hope, our profound hunger, our need for healing. After Bartimaeus comes and stands before Jesus, he asks the blind man, "What do you want me to do for you?" If we are to make disciples of Jesus, we must become congregations that ask people what are their deepest hurts and hopes, then invite them to see that Jesus is standing before them ready to respond. Vital, growing congregations are those that have healthy ways to invite persons to name before Christ their deepest hurts and hopes.

Third, Jesus always challenges us to trust a new reality–a reality not dictated by cultural ethics, not governed by our own self-interest, but a reality visible only through the eyes of faith. This is the reality of inversion. The reality that the last shall be first. The reality that new life is born of death. The reality that God became incarnate in a helpless baby. The reality that Christ's death and resurrection is the doorway to wholeness and salvation. When the blind man told Jesus his greatest hope was to be made whole, to have his sight restored, Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." If we are to make disciples of Jesus, we must have congregations that call people to act on their faith, to trust the new reality, to risk that God in Christ will heal, save, forgive, transform, make new. We must have congregations that will invite people to share in the mystery and power of Christ's death and resurrection.

Fourth, Jesus empowers us to bear witness and to make visible his transforming power. Mark's gospel tells us that "immediately Bartimaeus regained his sight and followed Jesus on the way." The way is the journey to Jerusalem and the cross. The very next story in all the synoptic gospels is Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on what we call Palm or Passion Sunday. Bartimaeus became a part of the kingdom movement. If we are to make disciples of Jesus, we must become congregations that help people see that they are healed, transformed and gifted for a purpose–to become the kingdom of God on earth, as it is in heaven. We are called to be in the world "incarnating"-making flesh and blood real–God's all-inclusive, unconditional, extravagant love and grace. Our fundamental privilege and responsibility as Christians is to be obedient to Christ's incarnational mission. We are to make visible the reign of God.

OUR MISSION

Our Discipline is clear on the mission of the United Methodist Church. The mission of The United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. The West Ohio Conference exists for the making of disciples by equipping its local churches for ministry. The local church provides the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit, the church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers, and the redemption of the world. Therefore, it is essential that local congregations of believers be strengthened, supported and multiplied across this great Conference.

I believe God is already giving the West Ohio Conference a picture of our preferred future. The vision that is emerging is a conference in which every congregation is a healthy, growing, spiritually vital, risk-taking center for making and equipping disciples of Jesus for the purpose of transforming the world.

If we are to live into this vision, we must be willing to trust that God can do what we alone cannot do. If we are to reach this preferred future, we must be willing to think strategically and act boldly. If we are to realize this vision, we must be willing to leave our institutionalized, mechanized and bureaucratic view of who we are, and live into a new, more organic, more dynamic way of imaging and organizing our ministry. Folks, this means change. But not change for change's sake. This means change for the sake of Christ's mission of reaching the least and the lost and redeeming the world.

I have identified six interactive areas of mission and ministry that, I believe, must be addressed if we are to create a comprehensive approach to achieve this emerging vision.

1. Starting new churches and worshipping congregations to multiply our centers of disciple-making;

2. Revitalizing the disciple-making process in existing congregations;

3. Re-aligning our conference and district resources to match our emerging vision;

4. Developing spiritual leaders to equip our congregations for their disciple-making mission;

5. Funding the vision in new and creative ways; and

6. Strengthening the connection to extend and support the vision.

Allow me to expand on each of these six areas and offer a number of recommendations or vision elements. While I have attempted to listen to your hopes and dreams as I have become acquainted with West Ohio over the past nine months, I take

full responsibility for these ideas. I invite you to prayerfully consider which of these vision elements you believe God is calling us to embrace.

NEW CHURCH/MINISTRY STARTS

Several years ago, I attended a conference on congregational development led by Lyle Schaller. After being introduced, Schaller walked to the podium and spoke one word, "automobile." Then he returned to his chair. After what seemed like an extremely long and awkward silence, Schaller returned to the microphone and reminded us that the most revolutionary change in congregational life in the last century was the automobile. People drive to church. They no longer walk or ride in horse-drawn carriages. Our current placement of congregations is an outgrowth of the efforts of the pioneer circuit riders. Churches were located a few miles apart or within a few blocks of one another because people walked or drove horses to church. This agrarian-inspired model of church planting no longer reflects the radical shifts in population or lifestyles within the last fifty years. Forty percent of our Ohio population lives in urban areas. If we were to start over today, I wonder where we would place our congregations?

Methodism spread across this continent like wildfire because those pioneer circuit riders were committed to going where the people lived and worked. One of the primary reasons we need to be starting new congregations and new ministries is to be where the people are living. This does not mean just planting churches in fast-growing suburban areas, but also starting new congregations and new ministries in our urban centers, isolated rural communities, and among populations that we have neglected–the poor, new immigrants, racial-ethnic groups, apartment dwellers, residents of mobile home parks, etc. In each of our larger metropolitan areas (Columbus, Cincinnati, Dayton and Toledo) there are more people living within the city centers than live in the suburban sprawl. We should be ashamed of not starting new congregations and ministries in our urban centers with the same intentionality and energy that we have done so in urban sprawl areas.

I want to come back to Lyle Schaller's work for a moment. Some years ago Schaller did some research that demonstrated that any judicatory–no matter what denomination, geographical location, or theological perspective–grew in membership and worship attendance when it was starting at least two percent of its existing congregations each year. With over 1,250 congregations in West Ohio, that translates into 25 new church starts per year. Such an ambitious goal can only be achieved if we move beyond the congregational development models that have been utilized by our denomination in recent years. We must become creative and bold.

SUGGESTED VISION ELEMENTS

1. Each district develops an appropriate strategy for starting a minimum of two new churches or worshipping congregations per year. This might include single point charges, satellite congregations, store-front or mobile home park worship centers, and second or third worship services in existing congregations.

2. As a conference, we commit the resources over the next four years to planting at least one new ethnic or multi-racial congregation in each of our four largest urban centers.

3. Establish a Church Planters Network of at least 100 congregations who will covenant with the Bishop and Annual Conference to either (a) start a satellite congregation, (b) parent a new church, or (c) provide financial, membership, or staff resources to assist with a new church start.

REVITALIZING EXISTING CONGREGATIONS

Our Book of Discipline reminds us that the local church provides the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs. The local church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers, and the redemption of the world. As critical as new church development is for the vitality and growth of the West Ohio Conference, it is equally important that each existing congregation is a vital community of faith clearly focused on its mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ. In order to do this, existing congregations must be able to adapt to the changing contexts in which they find themselves.

A recent study on membership decline in ten once-large United Methodist churches quoted by Dr. Lovett Weems in Saint Paul School of Theology's Leadership newsletter (Volume XI, No. 1; Fall, 2000) provides some insight into the characteristics that contribute to a congregation's inability to attract, nurture and equip new Christian disciples. The study, conducted by Judy A. Mugler, cites eight prominent factors for failure to make new disciples. They are:

1) **Inadequate leadership development**. Church members not adequately equipped to lead their churches into the future.

2) **Lack of vision and unclear sense of mission**. Church leaders do not have a significant sense of vision for the future. Values (such as valuing being a friendly church family) have become confused with mission.

3) **Failure to understand change**. This is the interaction of the church's traditional nature with a lack of understanding about or openness to change.

4) **A defender posture**. The church defines and defends a narrow range of program and worship styles, uses highly standardized procedures and serves a stable target audience.

5) **Lack of emphasis on growth**. The church is internally, rather than externally focused, and lacks a high commitment to growth.

6) **Weak link of Biblical faith to daily life**. Church members do not have a strong spiritual grounding in faith.

7) **Significant clergy mismatches**. Clergy leadership has not always been a good match for the needs of the congregation.

8) **Church crises and conflict**. The church's ministry has been interrupted by protracted conflict, power in the hands of a few, blaming each other for failures, or unresolved issues.

Unless we address these and other impediments to disciple-making in our existing local churches, our ability to be a vital witness for Jesus Christ in West Ohio will be lost, and we will devote an increasing, I dare say, debilitating, amount of our human and financial resources to institutional maintenance. There can be no greater sin in The Church of Christ.

There are four key elements to the disciple-making process. Some refer to this as the core process of disciple-making. The four key elements are:

1. Radical hospitality that reaches across economic, racial, age and gender lines and focuses on the stranger and those outside the community of faith.

2. Passionate worship that opens persons to experience the gracious presence and healing power of God.

3. Faith-forming relationships, experiences and education in the context of Christian community that lead persons to a disciplined life of devotion and service in the name of Jesus Christ.

4. Risk-taking service and mission that focuses our attention and spiritual gifts upon the world and its needs, especially the needs of children and the poor.

This core process has a direct correlation to Jesus' model of disciple-making found in Mark's gospel. The following table illustrates the relationship.

Jesus' Action	Spiritual Dynamic	Our Mission
Invites us into the community/journey	We are loved and valued	Radical hospitality (Reaching and Receiving)
Encourages us to become open and vulnerable to God	We are touched and healed by God's presence	Passionate Worship (Relating to God)
Challenges us to trust a new reality	Our selfishness grows smaller and our selflessness grows larger-we die to self and are resurrected to new life	Faith-Forming Relationships, Experiences and Education

		(Nurturing in Discipleship)
Empowers us to bear witness and serve	We become the kingdom on earth	Risk-taking Service and Mission (Sending to Serve)

If a local congregation is not intentionally addressing all four of these elements of the disciple-making process, it is most likely not fulfilling its mission. The fields are too ripe unto harvest and the Church's witness is too critical for us to continue to ignore or make excuses for local congregations that are not contributing to our disciple-making mission. It is time for accountability. It is no longer acceptable that only 33% of our congregations had confirmation classes. It is no longer acceptable to lose nearly five thousand members per year. It is no longer acceptable to have congregations with no new confessions of faith. It is time for very intentional resourcing. It is time to re-think how we organize for ministry. It is time to be creative. It is time to recognize that the local congregation is not a fortress, but a launching pad for ministry. It is time to name the reality that the mission field is outside the front door of every local church in the West Ohio Conference.

I have a particular bias that the poor and marginalized and the children and youth of our society be the primary foci of our disciple-making efforts. The Bishop's Initiative on Children and Poverty calls every United Methodist congregation to "the proclamation in word and deed of the gospel of God's redeeming, reconciling and transforming grace in Jesus Christ to and with the children and those oppressed by poverty. The United Methodist Church is called to be a means of grace to the vulnerable."

The next youth boom will hit this country in 2006. That is the year the so-called millennial generation will come of age. In 2006, the millennial generation will all be 12 to 17 years old. That is prime youth ministry age! That is prime youth disciple-making age! The baby boomers peaked at 25 million. The millennial generation will peak at 26 million. We are looking at a generation of children and youth coming along that will be larger than the boomers. Are we ready? Is your church ready? Do you have the programs for children and youth in place? Do you have your children and youth leaders in place? We cannot afford to miss this generation. We must reach out through youth groups, youth Disciple Bible study, youth worship services, youth ministry centers, scouting ministries, campus ministries, through every means possible. This has already begun. The Joshua Project is a Youth Ministry Initiative of the West Ohio Conference that has already helped 200 congregations begin their preparations.

SUGGESTED VISION ELEMENTS

1. The core process of disciple-making becomes the standard by which every congregation assess its vitality, establishes its ministry goals, determines its clergy leadership needs, and organizes and equips its lay leadership.

2. Every congregation is challenged to develop at least one strong ministry in each of the four areas of the disciple-making process, with a special emphasis on those ministries, which will produce the most leverage toward revitalization. Some key leverage ministries are (a) a newcomers ministry, (b) additional worship services designed for those persons not currently attending worship, (c) quality after-school ministries for children, (d) youth discipling ministries, (e) Disciple Bible Study, Walk to Emmaus, or Christian Believer, (f) spiritual gifts and/or servant leadership training, (g) stewardship education, and (i) Volunteer in Missions projects.

3. Each district develops a proposal for parish alignment and regional churches or parishes that will strengthen the individual congregation's ability to make Christian disciples. A variety of parish and multiple staff models should be utilized, including cooperative parishes, blended churches, preaching outposts, and shared staff. The goal should be to move toward parish configurations where there are at least 250 in worship attendance for each elder in full connection. This does not mean closing congregations. It does mean moving toward a regional mission focus and better stewardship of clergy leadership resources.

4. Make implementation of the West Ohio Conference Urban Strategy a top priority. This strategy was approved by West Ohio's 2000 Annual Conference session.

5. Every congregation become familiar with and participate in implementing the goals of the Bishops' Initiative on Children and Poverty. Our conference Evangelism Committee has already developed one helpful resource titled, "Opening Our Doors to Wholeness." The newly constituted conference Task Force on Children and Poverty is developing additional resources.

6. Every congregation explore ways to participate in the national Igniting Ministry campaign, starting with sending a team of leaders to one of the four training events being offered across the conference later this month. The purpose of the training is to help local congregations extend hospitality to visitors and newcomers.

REALIGNING OUR CONFERENCE AND DISTRICT RESOURCES

One of the greatest challenges facing a large, diverse and divided conference like West Ohio is systems improvement and alignment. Our unity will be discovered and our energy will be unleashed when we discern together a common vision for our witness to the world. However, little progress will be made toward implementing the vision if our conference and district resources are not aligned toward that vision. We must learn how to identify the constraints in the flow of our conference life and how to remove those constraints. We must bring alignment of the parts of our conference life not yet focused on the vision and mission. We must help each part of the conference structure realize that their turf is the whole conference and not just their part. We must be willing to address the resistance and conflict that is natural and a healthy part of change.

SUGGESTED VISION ELEMENTS

1. Redefine the "job description" of the district superintendents so that their primary functions are (a) spiritual leadership, (b) vision casting, (c) mission consultant to local churches, and (d) initiator of new congregations or faith communities. This will mean attending fewer meetings, unless they are directly related to the disciple-making mission of the conference.

2. Review the current Conference Council on Ministries staffing model to bring the staff resource into greater alignment with the mission of the conference.

3. Re-align the district program consultant positions so that they focus exclusively on (a) resourcing existing congregations around the four elements of the core process, and (b) assisting the district superintendents and district strategy committees in developing new congregations and faith communities.

4. Explore ways to re-align the funding patterns of the annual conference to more adequately resource and support congregational and community development.

5. Develop a plan to phase out, over a five-year period, minimum salary support, except in the cases of new congregational development or exceptional missional opportunities. In most cases, congregations or parishes will be aligned or staffed in such a manner as to provide an adequate funding base for ministry.

6. Continue the process of re-aligning conference and district structures to reflect their primary functions of (a) equipping local congregations for the core process of disciple-making, (b) forming and deploying spiritual leaders, and (c) providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church. The Conference Council on Ministries is already taking the lead in this area of systems re-alignment.

7. Develop a new apportionment formula that is not based on membership and, to the extent possible, does not penalize membership and missional growth.

DEVELOPING SPIRITUAL LEADERS

The stated mission of the West Ohio Conference is "to identify, equip and empower spiritual leaders for the ministry of Jesus Christ." From the famous Christmas Conference in 1784 that organized The Methodist Episcopal Church in America, the primary purpose of the annual conferences has been the edification and deployment of the movement's lay and ordained leadership. It is a rather recent development for annual conferences to **assume** or be **assigned** by General Conference other programmatic and missional functions. It is appropriate for the West Ohio Conference to once again claim as its primary, if not sole, responsibility to "identify, equip and empower spiritual leaders." Indeed, this is the most effective means the annual conference has to equip and resource its local churches for their mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ. I am convinced that the key to new church development and the revitalization of existing

congregations is leadership–effective, well-trained, supported, passionate lay and clergy leadership.

The Methodist movement began in this country as a lay led movement. I believe our future vitality will be found in re-claiming this heritage. This means, among other things, that we seek a renewed and mutual partnership between lay and clergy leadership in our local churches, districts and conference.

In my initial introductory visits to each of the fourteen districts this past fall and winter, I made it clear that I expect three things from the clergy leadership of this conference–leadership, leadership, leadership. More specifically, I expect spiritual leadership, servant leadership and visionary leadership. All the studies I have read consistently identify the singular, most important factor in congregational vitality is effective, spirit-led, servant-oriented, bold, visionary clergy.

Please hear me on this next point. Effectiveness in ministry is grounded in call and covenant. It is our call, and the daily rehearsal and attention to that call, that gives us passion for ministry. It is our covenant with God and one another, and the regular attention to being in covenant community, that guides and focuses our passion for ministry. That is why, at least for me, leadership development will always be first and foremost an issue of **being formed in the image of Christ for the sake of the world**.

The church expects its leadership not only to be highly skilled, but also to be deeply grounded in a faith relationship with God. Evidence of this faith relationship is an active inner life that is guiding the leader toward a maturing relationship with God, a greater sense of self-awareness and a deepening solidarity with the broken, hurting, forgotten children of God. The only way to develop this inner life and to stay alive and well in ministry is to tend to our own spiritual health. This means developing and keeping a rule of life – a discipline of attentiveness to God. Jesus calls us to a life of radical attentiveness. God created us with a built-in hunger to have God fill us.

Our Wesleyan heritage calls us to attend to all the ordinances of God-to practice the means of grace. In a letter to an early lay preacher, John Wesley wrote: "O, Begin! Fix some part of every day for private exercises. Whether you like it or no, read and pray daily. It is for your life; there is no other way: else you will be a trifler all your days… Do justice to your soul; give it time and means to grow. Do not starve yourself any longer." Perhaps the greatest challenge we face in developing and deploying effective clergy leadership to every congregation and new ministry in West Ohio is our tendency to **starve** ourselves of the power and presence of the living God.

SUGGESTED VISION ELEMENTS

1. Continue the excellent Academy for New Church Starts.

2. Create an additional Academy for Congregational Revitalization, or add a tract to the Academy for New Church Starts that focuses specifically on preparing pastors who are called to re-develop or re-start existing congregations.

3. Develop a strategy for recruiting, supporting and retaining strong ethnic pastors, particularly African-Americans.

4. Partner with United Theological Seminary to develop a Center for Urban Leadership Development that will train leaders for urban ministry, mental health work, prison ministries and starting new urban congregations.

5. Start a School for Lay Missioners that will prepare lay persons for significant spiritual leadership roles within their home churches or in the development of new ministries and revitalization ministries across the Conference.

6. Develop a School of Evangelism that focuses on how to lead a congregation through the changes necessary to effectively reach people for Christ. This would be a school with several sessions over a two-year period attended by teams of clergy and lay leadership. The goal would be to have 75% of the congregations participate in the school over the next six to eight years.

7. Develop a central Ohio Adult Retreat and Renewal Center in partnership with The Methodist School in Ohio and OhioHealth with the purpose of providing a sacred space for spiritual renewal, retreats, Christian conferencing, and life-long learning in community.

8. Explore the establishment of an Area Office of Spiritual Formation with a director experienced in spiritual direction and pastoral care and counseling.

9. The Board of Ordained Ministry, Board of General Ministry and Cabinet partner to develop clear and consistent standards and expectations for clergy leadership that are related to the core process for disciple-making. Such standards and expectations should serve as a common language and common aim for aligning all parts of the clergy recruitment, credentialing, formation, nurturing, deploying and supervising system. This work has begun.

10. Partner with United Theological Seminary and The Methodist Theological School in Ohio to focus a portion of their respective curriculums on our standards and expectations for clergy leadership and our vision for every congregation becoming a vital center of disciple-making.

11. Commit to longer pastorates, with the minimum of five year appointments becoming the norm.

12. Develop support and intervention resources that will increase the likelihood of longer pastorates. These resources may include (a) negotiating ministry workshops for all

SPRC and pastors entering into a new appointment, (b) multiple staff workshops, (c) conflict resolution teams, (d) interim pastorates, (e) cross racial appointment and first clergywoman appointment transition teams, (f) a Healing and Recovery Team for sexual misconduct situations, and (g) additional training or mentoring for pastors who consistently struggle with developing effective trust relationships with congregations.

13. Initiate and adequately fund a Ministry Transition Fund which the Cabinet and Board of Ordained Ministry can use in assisting those clergy who transition to another status temporarily, or transition from ordained ministry to general ministry to do so with dignity, security and justice.

14. Develop on-going mentoring and education programs for lay pastors and local pastors for those areas of our conference with a large percentage of local and lay pastors. The Athens District has a good model that could serve as a starting place. Perhaps three or four regional "centers" for such education and mentoring could be developed across the conference.

15. Continue and expand the conference's excellent servant leadership training program.

16. Develop a functioning Order of Elders within the West Ohio Conference for the purpose of providing nurture and spiritual formation experience for pastors, and continue the development of our already established Order of Deacons.

FUNDING THE VISION

Much of what I have outlined in this presentation will not happen without significant stewardship development and capital funding. Although I have not conducted any feasibility study and what I am about to say seems reckless even to me. I want to encourage you and the entire West Ohio Conference to appreciate the magnitude of the opportunity and challenge that lies before us. I believe we will need to commit at least $100 million over the next six to eight years toward realizing the vision elements I have outlined. This will mean raising new funds, as well as re-aligning existing funds to focus on the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ.

Such a goal is achievable if …

   … we are open to God's leading;

   … we live out of a theology of abundance rather than an attitude of scarcity;

   … we move beyond turf protection to alignment around a shared vision of a vital, growing church;

…   we understand that we cannot do this on our own, but that it can only be accomplished through faith in the Covenant God who created us, redeemed us and sustains us.

SUGGESTED VISION ELEMENTS

1. Commit at least $100 million over the next six to eight years toward funding our emerging vision.

2. Re-align our conference budget so that a minimum of two million dollars is available annually for congregational and community development projects and an additional $500,000 is available annually for leadership development.

3. Initiate a three-year capital campaign to raise capital for new church starts, an adult retreat and conference center, and an urban ministry initiative.

4. Develop a large rotating loan fund for new church and redevelopment projects from investment funds already controlled by agencies of the Annual Conference.

5. Call upon the West Ohio Conference Council on Development to focus a portion of its annual fundraising efforts on congregational development.

6. Create a Great Commission Investment Fund and invite local congregations to invest a portion or all of their investment or endowment funds in the creating of new and revitalized congregations. The goal would be a fund of at least $50 million. Investors would receive an annual return on their deposits and the remainder of the earnings would be available as grants to new church or revitalization projects.

7. Develop a Church Planters Network of 100 congregations to support new church development.

8. Revitalize the West Ohio Conference Builders program and invite at least 5,000 individuals to covenant with the Bishop to provide a minimum of $50.00 per call of the Bishop for emerging or emergency congregational development needs. There would be no more than two calls per year.

9. Create a VIM program within the West Ohio Conference exclusively dedicated to the building of new church facilities or the remodeling and expanding of existing church facilities.

10. Initiate a comprehensive stewardship training program for local congregations, pastors and key lay leadership.

STRENGTHENING THE CONNECTION

One of the greatest contributions the Methodist movement has made to the understanding of the Church is the concept of connectionalism. It is reflected in our theology of baptism and church membership. When you join any local United Methodist church, you join every United Methodist congregation. It is reflected in our approach to missions. We are able to do together what any one local congregation could never accomplish alone. It is reflected in our funding patterns. Our apportionments allow us to share the common costs of administering the church, allocate resources where they are most needed, and share in common missional endeavors. It is reflected in our system of appointing pastors. Our itinerant system means all elders in full connection are members of an annual conference for the purpose of being deployed where their gifts are most needed at any given time.

But, the connectional system is under siege. Increasingly our members, and a good number of our pastors, prefer a more independent, congregational polity. We live in a time of distrust of large institutions and their leaders. People want to see, and with good reason, where their money goes and what it accomplishes. United Methodists are notably generous when deeply committed to a cause or an issue, but equally stingy when uncommitted to a cause, no matter how important it may be. We have become comfortable with, even prefer, conditional stewardship, giving only on the condition that "I" like everything the church is doing or saying.

These recent trends in our attitude toward connectionalism are not who we are. These attitudes are not a part of our Wesleyan DNA. It is time to again embrace our Methodist roots and strengthen the connection so that our disciple-making efforts can be multiplied within our conference and extended throughout the world. Indeed, the world is our parish!

SUGGESTED VISION ELEMENTS

1.   Seek new and creative ways to tell the story of the church's mission and the impact our connectedness has on changing lives and winning people for Christ.

2.   Commit ourselves as an annual conference to paying 100% of all general church apportionments, beginning with our 2002 budget.

3.   Increase our apportionment giving by 2% a year until we reach 100%.

4.   Make stewardship education a priority on every district.

5.   Develop a partnership with one or more United Methodist conferences in Africa for the purpose of strengthening their ability to make disciples and address the overwhelming human needs created by civil war, poverty and HIV/AIDS.

6.   Commit to raising our share of the Hope for the Children of Africa offering. This is a part of the Bishops' Initiative on Children and Poverty. Our share is $421,793. To date we have committed only $51,184.

7.   Commit to raising at least $100,000 toward the Russia United Methodist Theological Seminary Capital Campaign. The United Methodist Church is rapidly growing in Russia. Their greatest need is for trained clergy and lay leadership.

8.   Continue to strengthen our emerging partnership with the Oriental Conference of the Mexican Methodist Church.

9.   Each district sponsor at least two Volunteers in Mission teams each year.

10. Explore creative ways for congregations to develop shared ministries and partnerships that will strengthen their witness.

CONCLUSION

These various vision elements are not intended to be complete or even cohesive. They are a starting place for our ongoing discernment in the months ahead as we chart the course to which God is calling us. I truly believe that God has given those of you in this auditorium even better, clearer, more tangible glimpses of God's vision for us.

I thank you for your attention. I am honored by your commitment to engage in this visioning process. I look forward to our dialogue.

Finally, let me share with you how truly hopeful I am. John Nesbitt in his nearly decade old book, Megatrends concludes his reflections on the threshold time in which we seek to be a faithful witness with a hope-filled shout, "My God, what a fantastic time to be alive!"

This is God's time. We are God's people. We are seeking to understand and carry out God's mission in the world. We desire to be faithful. What a fantastic time to be alive!

Bishop Bruce R. Ough
Ohio West Area
The United Methodist Church

APPENDIX B

Beeson Church Health Questionnaire

INSTRUCTIONS: Listed below are 54 statements that describe characteristics of our church and your relationship to it followed by 13 personal questions. Please rate your perceptions of the strength of each characteristic by using the scale provided and writing the appropriate number in the box to the right of the statement. Your responses will be treated confidentially, and your participation will help our church leaders be better informed as we seek to discern future strategic initiatives for our church.

5	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
STRONGLY AGREE	*MODERATELY AGREE*	*NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE*	*MODERATELY DISAGREE*	*STRONGLY DISAGREE*

1. I enjoy getting together with other people from my church outside of church events .... ☐
2. The leaders of our church seem rather defensive.* .... ☐
3. I find the sermons convicting, challenging, and encouraging to my walk with God. .... ☐
4. Our church has a very clear purpose and well-defined values. .... ☐
5. My local church actively reaches out to its neighborhood through spiritual and
   community service. .... ☐
6. My church affirms me in my ministry tasks. .... ☐
7. I regularly practice the spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible study, fasting, and
   meditation). .... ☐
8. I have a close enough relationship with several people in my church that I can discuss
   my deepest concerns with them. .... ☐
9. Our church is led by individual(s) who articulate vision and achieve results. .... ☐
10. I find the worship services spiritually inspiring. .... ☐
11. Our church clearly communicates our mission statement. .... ☐
12. Prayer is a highlight of the worship service. .... ☐
13. Tithing is a priority in my life. .... ☐
14. New ministry ideas are normally appreciated and encouraged. .... ☐
15. The music in the church services helps me worship God. .... ☐

5	4	3	2	1
STRONGLY AGREE	*MODERATELY AGREE*	*NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE*	*MODERATELY DISAGREE*	*STRONGLY DISAGREE*

16. I do not know my church's plans and direction for the years ahead.*.................................. ☐

17. I am actively involved in a ministry of this church. .... ☐

18. Our church relies upon the power and presence of God to accomplish ministry. .... ☐

19. My prayer life reflects a deep dependence on God concerning the practical aspects of

life. .... ☐

20. I have experienced a lot of joy and laughter in our church.. ☐

21. There are few training opportunities in our church.* .... ☐

22. The worship at this church is so inspiring that I would like to invite my friends.................... ☐

23. This church teaches that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven.. ☐

24. I do not know my spiritual gift(s).* .... ☐

25. There is a sense of expectation surrounding our church.. ☐

26. Our church has a clear process that develops people's spiritual gift(s)................................. ☐

27. I experience deep, honest relationships with a few other people in my church....................... ☐

28. The lay people of our church receive frequent training... ☐

29. Excellence is an important value in how we accomplish ministry. .... ☐

30. This church shows the love of Christ in practical ways... ☐

31. I enjoy the tasks I do in the church. .... ☐

32. There is an atmosphere of generosity within our church... ☐

33. I would describe my personal spiritual life as growing. .... ☐

34. The love and acceptance I have experienced inspires me to invite others to my

church.. ☐

35. I look forward to attending worship services at this church. .... ☐

5	4	3	2	1
STRONGLY AGREE	MODERATELY AGREE	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	MODERATELY DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

36. I have confidence in the management and spending of our church's financial resources. ....☐

37. In our church the importance of sharing Christ is often discussed. ....☐

38. I feel that my role in the church is very important...☐

39. Our church emphasizes the person and presence of the Holy Spirit.....................................☐

40. My church needs to place more emphasis on the power of prayer.*....................................☐

41. The leaders and members of our church enjoy and trust one another. ....☐

42. When I leave a worship service, I feel like I have "connected" with other worshippers...☐

43. My church is open to changes that would increase our ability to reach and disciple people...☐

44. Our church has very few programs that appeal to non-Christians.*.....................................☐

45. I share my faith with non-believing family and friends..☐

46. This church operates through the power and presence of God..☐

47. I rarely consult God's word to find answers to life's issues.*...☐

48. The leaders of our church seem to be available when needed...☐

49. We have an effective and efficient decision-making process in my church..........................☐

50. When I leave a worship service, I feel I have had a meaningful experience with God..........☐

51. People rarely come to know Jesus Christ as their savior in our church.*..............................☐

52. The teaching ministry of this church encourages me to be involved in ministry. ....☐

53. I currently enjoy a greater intimacy with God than at any other time in my life...................☐

54. I believe that interpersonal conflict or misconduct is dealt with appropriately and in a biblical manner...☐

PERSONAL INFORMATION

55. Your age...☐

56. Gender

    1. Female..☐

    2. Male ....☐

57. Marital status

    1. Single ....☐

    2. Married..☐

    3. Widowed ....☐

    4. Other: _____ ....☐

58. Number of children..☐

59. The following are a regular part of my spiritual life. **Check all that apply.**
    1. Bible study ....☐

    2. Devotional times ....☐

    3. Family devotional time ....☐

    4. Ministry...☐

    5. Prayer ....☐

    6. Sharing my faith with others...☐

    7. Other spiritual disciplines (fasting, etc.)...☐

60. Which best describes your current involvement with the local church you attend most? **Check only one.**
    1. Attendee only ....☐

    2. Leadership board member..☐

    2. Ministry leader/teacher ....☐

    3. Pastoral Staff..☐

61. Are you a member of this church?
    1. Yes ....☐

    2. No...☐

62. Approximately how many years have you been involved with this particular church?.........☐

63. Which of the following best describes how often you attend weekend worship services? **Check one.**
    1. Visitor .... ☐
    2. 1-2 times a month.. ☐
    3. 3 or more times a month .... ☐

64. In the past year, what percentage of your total income from all sources did you give to your local church (approximately)?.. ☐

65. Our current church staff is _____ for the ministries of our church. **Check one.**

    1. understaffed... ☐
    2. adequate .... ☐
    3. overstaffed.. ☐

66. I actively participate in a small group or ministry team.
    1. Yes .... ☐
    2. No... ☐

67. How would you describe the community within which your church is located? **Check one.**

    1. Growing and thriving... ☐
    2. Plateaued.. ☐
    3. Declining.. ☐

68. The size of our church facility is adequate for our current ministries.
    1. Yes .... ☐
    2. No... ☐

69. I would describe my personal spiritual life as…
    1. growing .... ☐
    2. plateaued .... ☐
    3. declining... ☐

Thank you very much for your participation in this important study of our church!

APPENDIX C

Congregational Contextual Factors Questionnaire

(to be answered by pastor of church)

This survey should be completed by the pastor or designated leader. Thank you for participating. Your answers will provide valuable information about your local context. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability.

Note: You will be asked to provide information regarding "baptisms" and "conversions." We recognize that the definition of these terms varies among Christians. Please interpret these terms in a way consistent with your denominational understanding.

1. What is the name of your church? _____

2. What is the name of the town your church is located in?

   _____

3. What is the denomination of your church? _____

4. How long have you served as Senior Pastor of this church? (Circle one)

   0-2 yrs.   3-6yrs.   7-10yrs.   10-15yrs.   Over 15yrs.

5. What is the age of the facility? (Circle one)

   1-3yrs.   3-5yrs.   5-10yrs.   10-15yrs.   Over 15yrs.

6. How large is the population within 20 minutes of your church? (Circle one)

   Under 5000   5000-15000   15000-50000   50,000-200,000   200,000+

7. What was the average weekend worship attendance for the following years:

   1999 _____
   2000 _____
   2001 _____
   2002 _____
   2003 _____

8. How many baptisms occurred in the following years:

    1999 _____

    2000 _____

    2001 _____

    2002 _____

    2003 _____

9. How many conversions were recorded in the following years:

    1999 _____

    2000 _____

    2001 _____

    2002 _____

    2003 _____

10. What is the membership recorded in the following years:

    1999 _____

    2000 _____

    2001 _____

    2002 _____

    2003 _____

APPENDIX D

Focus Group Protocol

I am studying the impact of the Core Process on the West Ohio Conference for my Doctor of Ministry dissertation at Asbury Seminary. Last month I conducted a survey of churches in the conference using the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire, which measures eight church health characteristics. To gain a deeper understanding of the data collected by the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire, I have invited you to participate in this one hour focus group interview. In the next hour we use three questions to guide our discussion. They are as follows:

1. What has been your experience of change in the West Ohio Conference during the period of 2001-2004?
2. What observations would you make about the changes that have been made in the conference in the last three years, and which of these changes can be attributed to the Core Process Vision?
3. What is yet to be done in order for the conference to move closer to the fulfillment of the vision?

Before we discuss these questions, and the various issues they may raise for us, allow me to share with you what I discovered in my survey of the 140 West Ohio churches. (Report BCHQ 2004 findings and describe the change in each church health characteristic from BCHQ 2001.)

For the remainder of our time, I will be audio taping our discussion for the purpose of gathering the data accurately. The waiver I asked you to sign when you agreed to participate in this study guarantees you anonymity. Let's proceed in discussing the three questions which will guide our discussion.

1. What has been your experience of change in the West Ohio Conference during the period of 2001-2004?

    Probe question issues: people, process, systemic issues, emotional impact of change.

2. What observations would you make about the changes that have been made in the conference in the last three years, and which of these changes can be attributed to the Core Process Vision?

    Probe question issues: people, systemic issues, obstacles, types of leaders.

3. What is yet to be done in order for the conference to move closer to the fulfillment of the vision?

    Probe question issues: systemic shifts, resource issues, leadership development.

APPENDIX E

Leadership Questionnaire: Clergy and Lay Members to Annual Conference

Issue: Leadership and Vision

Question:
During the last two or three years, how has your pastor encouraged your congregation to accomplish the Conference vision?

Probes:
1. How has this vision been communicated in your local church?
2. How has your pastor and other church leadership aligned your church's ministries with this vision?
3. What are 2-3 obvious ways the Conference vision is being fulfilled in your congregation?

Issue: Hope and Health

Question:
How has the mood or overall feeling in your church changed in the last three years?

Probes:
1. To what do you attribute this change?
2. Which of the Beeson Church Health characteristics is most evident in your congregation?
3. Which of the Beeson Church Health characteristics is least evident in your congregation?

Issue: Health and Growth

Question:
What are the signs of growth (numerical, spiritual, economical, physical) that you observe in your congregation?

Probes:
1. Have you seen evidence of growth (numerical, spiritual, economical, physical) in the West Ohio Conference during the last 2-3 years?
2. If yes, to what do you attribute that growth?
3. If no, what do you believe is inhibiting that growth?

APPENDIX F

Leadership Questionnaire: West Ohio Cabinet

Issue: Leadership and Vision
Since 2001, the leaders of the West Ohio Conference, under the leadership of Bishop Ough, have been engaged in the process of casting a unified vision for the entire conference in which "every congregation is a healthy, growing, spiritually-vital, risk-taking center for making and equipping disciples of Jesus Christ for the purpose of transforming the world."
Question:
How do you adjust your own vision, your own sense of what needs to happen in your particular district, with that of the Bishop's vision for the Conference?
Probes:
1. In your opinion, what needs to happen to see the Conference vision become a reality in more of the congregations in your district?
2. How do you see the Conference vision impacting the appointment process?
3. What are 2-3 obvious ways the Conference vision is being fulfilled in the congregations in your district?

Issue: Hope and Health
The stereotypical United Methodist congregation is one that stayed, traditional, and focused on survival.
Question:
What are some examples of the congregations in your district which have gone from this stereotype to one of hope and vitality?
Probes:
1. What are the factors that you see have contributed to that transformation?
2. Which of the eight Beeson Church Health characteristics is most evident in these congregations?
3. In your opinion, what prevents these health characteristics from being realized in other congregations in your district?

Issue: Health and Growth
A main emphasis of the Conference vision is to see every local church obtain congregational health.
Question:
Since church health can be a relative term, how does this aspect of the vision get defined, clarified, shaped, and implemented via the Cabinet and other key leaders?
Probes:
1. What evidence have you seen of health and growth in the West Ohio Conference during the last 2-3 years?
2. If yes, to what do you attribute such positive change?
3. If no, what do you believe is inhibiting such change?

APPENDIX G

Leadership Questionnaire: Bishop

Issue: Leadership and Vision
In their book, *Trust Me*, Wayne Hastings and Ron Potter state, "When followers truly understand the vision, the leader needs to step aside and let them do the work to 'produce' the vision."
Question:
What steps are you currently taking or plan to take in the future to ensure that ownership of the vision transcends you and the members of the cabinet?
Probes:
1. What kind of systemic strategies are in place that are helping you to extend the vision to the rest of the conference?
2. How do you see the conference vision impacting the pastoral appointment process and the selection of district superintendents?
3. Is there a place within the conference vision for a pastor to have a detailed vision for a local church or a community that would impact the appointment process?

Issue: Hope and Health
James Kouzes and Barry Posner, in their book *Encouraging the Heart*, say, "Increased self-esteem (of an organization), produced by the high expectations (of the leader), is the fulcrum for leveraging change."
Question:
What do you believe to be the unrealized potential of the West Ohio Conference?
Probes:
1. What do you see as the hopes and fears of local congregations in the WOC?
2. What are the hopes and fears of pastors in the WOC?
3. What changes need to occur in you personally to enable the conference to reach its unrealized potential?

Issue: Health and Growth
Most local congregations in the West Ohio Conference average 100 people or less in weekly worship attendance, and therefore often function as a family system with their own systems and structures as well as their own spoken and unspoken values.
Question:
What are the systems and structures that the people of the WOC value and how can these values foster growth in local congregations?
Probes:
1. What are the systems and structures that you feel are impeding growth in the WOC?
2. What is being done to transform those systems and structures so that we can live more fully into the vision at the local church level?
3. What other strategies do you sense need to be implemented to help align the conference with the vision?

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